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To the Bancroft Library for their collection of Oral Histories
with thanks to Prof James Hart, Miss Wille Baum, Mrs Rosemary Lervenson and
our daughter Evelyn Bingham Godman for their assistance and advice with my
 sincere appreciation. Ursula W. Bingham.

Ursula W. Bingham

URSULA BINGHAM: A LADY'S LIFE: NEW ENGLAND, BERKELEY, CHINA

Dedicated to Professor Woodbridge Bingham

An Interview Conducted by
Rosemary Levenson
in 1983



Ursula Griswold Bingham, c. 1968

San Francisco Chronicle

May 13, 1998

BINGHAM, Ursula Wolcott Griswold — Beloved mother and grandmother, died on May 11, 1998 at Orinda Convalescent and Rehabilitation Hospital, Orinda, California of stroke-related complications.

Descended from three Governors of Connecticut, Ursula was born June 28, 1908 to Evelyn Sloane and William Edward Schenck Griswold in Greenwich, Connecticut.

In 1928, she married Woodbridge Bingham, son of Hiram Bingham, a Governor and Senator from Connecticut and discoverer of Machu Picchu, Peru's 'Lost City of the Incas'.

Ursula settled in Berkeley with her late husband, a Professor of Far Eastern History and founder of the East Asiatic Institute at the University of California. She also accompanied him on several trips to the Far and Middle East, living for two years in China and Japan before World War II.

Among her many accomplishments and activities, Ursula served on the National Board of the YWCA for 2 decades, and, for 35 years, as a Trustee for the Pacific School of Religion.

She is survived by her four daughters, Mrs. Anne Altrocchi of Old Lyme, CT, Mrs. Clare Cochran of North Stamford, CT, Mrs. Evelyn Goodman of Kensington, CA, Mrs. Marian McAdams of Salem, CT; ten grandchildren; ten great grandchildren; brothers John Griswold of Greenwich, CT and Wes Griswold Jr. of Old Lyme, CT; and sister Adela Bartholomew of Old Lyme, CT.

A memorial service was held at the First Congregational Church in Berkeley, California May 12, 1998, arrangements made by the Bayview Chapel in Berkeley, CA. A family service and burial will be held in Connecticut at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Oral History Section of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

This is the story of the life and times of Ursula Wolcott Griswold Bingham, a power for good in public charities and private kindnesses, faculty wife, mother of four, and grandmother of ten.

Ursula was born in 1908. She is descended from two distinguished New England families and married into a third. She thrived on the characteristic upbringing for a lady of her class and period. When Woodbridge Bingham fell in love with her, she married him and travelled with him from Harvard to Berkeley, and on to China and Japan in the turbulent '30's.

After World War II, the family settled for good in Berkeley where Woodbridge taught Chinese history until his retirement in 1969.

In 1981 she suffered a disabling stroke while swimming in Long Island Sound. She responded to this with her customary courage and decisiveness at the time of the incident and with even more praiseworthy determination to recover as much mobility and independence as she could in the long rehabilitation process.

In 1983, Ursula's husband asked me if I would conduct an oral history with her as I had worked for eleven years in the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library and we were long time friends. I accepted the invitation with pleasure.

In preparation for the interviews, I reviewed family papers and consulted family members and friends. Before each meeting, I prepared an agenda for Ursula, and the interviews loosely followed these outlines.

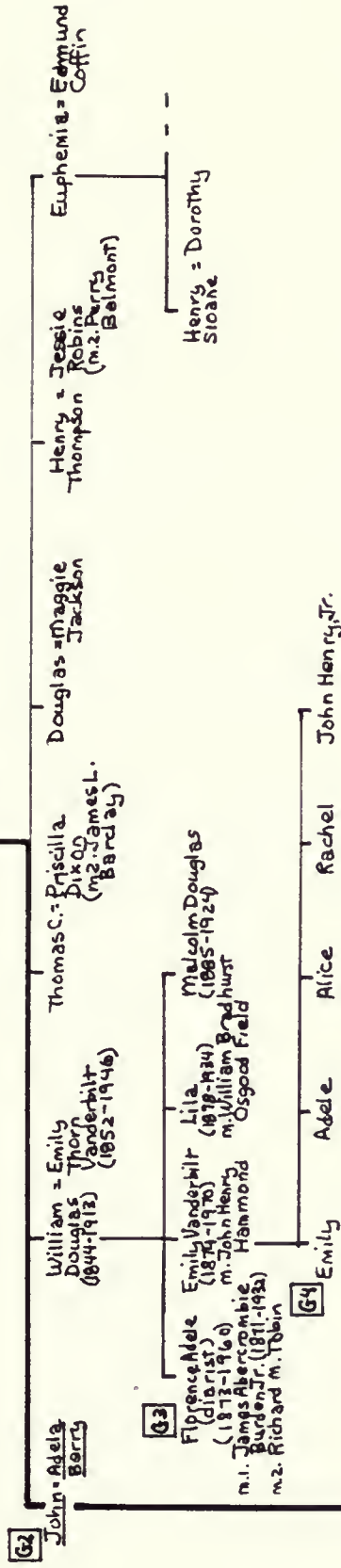
We met in the dining room of the Binghams' beautiful house on Greenwood Common in Berkeley. Papers would spread out all over the table as we checked recollections against the factual record. Usually, we took a pleasant break for coffee and refreshments.

Twelve tape recorded interviews took place between September and December of 1983. The tapes were then transcribed, edited for continuity, and returned to Ursula for review. She made extensive revisions and emendations which were incorporated into the final typed version. The manuscript was indexed, illustrated and bound. A copy of the memoir with the original tapes has been deposited in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Other copies have been deposited at Yale, the New York Public Library, the Colonial Dames National Library in Washington, D.C., the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and presented to members of the family.

Rosemary Levenson
Interviewer/Editor

Sloane Genedology Ursula Wolcott Griswold Bingham

★ G1 William Sloane = Euphemia Douglas
(1810-1879) (1810-1886)



G3 William = Frances Crocker

Evelyn = William Edward Schenck Griswold
m. Sept. 7, 1907

John = Elsie Nichols (died)
= Hope Colgate

G4 Ursula = Woodbridge Bingham
b. 1908

Evelyn = Grantz Mayor

William ES. Jr. = Caroline Marsh (died)
= Jean F.

Dwight = Stratton Nicholson

G5 Anne b. 1929 m. 1. 1954 Richard Norris Pierson Jr. M.D. divorced 1991
m. 2. 1978 Richard T. Wright

Clarissa b. 1931 m. 1. 1953 Edward Osgood Brown, M.D. divorced 1969 James S. Tunge

Evelyn b. 1939 m. 1. 1970 Richard Sewall Prosser divorced 1983 m. 2. 1984 Michael Arthur Goodman Jr.

Marion b. 1940 m. 1960 William Bradford Hubbell Jr.

G6 Richard Virgie III b. 1956
Olivia b. 1959 m. 1984 James Jacobs
Alexandra de Forest b. 1964
Cordelia Comfort Stewart b. 1963
Marian Sloane b. 1953

Clarissa b. 1955 m. 1981 Robert E. Griffin
Anne b. 1953 m. 1984 Guy Biederman
Phyllis Wyatt b. 1958 m. 1984 Edward Eagle b. 1960

Drika b. 1962
Jonathan Bradford b. 1964

★ - G = Generation
underline shows direct line

G7 Katharine Melissa b. 1982

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I A FINE EAST COAST UPBRINGING

Grandparents

Rosemary

Levenson: I'm very pleased to be here, Ursula. Let's start your memoir by talking about your grandparents.

Ursula

Bingham: I'll start with my mother's family. My mother was Evelyn Sloane. Her father was John Sloane and her mother was Adela Berry Sloane*; they lived in New York City. My grandfather built the first fire-proof house there, on Fifth Avenue near what later was Seventieth Street, and it faced Central Park. It had a big, wide stoop and stairs up to the front door. The family would gather there on days when there were parades because many times on St. Patrick's Day, there were big parades down Fifth Avenue.

My grandfather's grandfather had started the firm of W&J Sloane, a furniture company in New York City. They were first way downtown and later moved up to Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Seventh Street.

My grandmother Sloane died when I was about three years old. My grandfather died shortly before Mother was married, on September 7, 1907.

Levenson: Where were they from originally?

Bingham: Far back, my Sloane grandparents came from Scotland. My grandfather was a close friend of Mr. Carnegie's in Dunfermline, across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh.

*Her father was a Dr. Berry who was the first medical doctor in Brooklyn, New York. My grandfather John Sloane and his brother William were, I believe, the founders of the Sloane Hospital of New York City.

Bingham: We still have lots of good Scots stories that were told at Christmas-time and Thnaksgiving when the family gathered together. I wish I could remember them because we all had a wonderful time together.

Levenson: What religion were they?

Bingham: They were staunch Presbyterians.

Levenson: And your father's family?

Bingham: My father's family were quite different. They were staunch Presbyterians too and New Englanders. They moved to Saybrook, Connecticut when the first settlers came there in the seventeenth century. They went across the river to the lands that were inhabited by Indians. They had a black servant and they took him along. They tilled the land at the mouth of the Connecticut River, and finally built him a little cabin. It was called Black's Hall, and since then that area of Old Lyme was called Black Hall. It's on the south edge of Old Lyme, Connecticut.

My grandfather was Matthew Griswold, and his ancestors had become judges and governors of the state, and people important in their community. They had a strong sense of community and of the developing country they were living in. When I was a child, they were still living--some of them--in the old house. We called it "the Aunts' House." It was a nice, roomy, New England house looking right out on the Sound. It was on the edge of a field and just beyond that field was Long Island Sound.

Three of my great aunts lived there when I was a child.

Although my father's family were of Presbyterian background, our great aunts belonged to the Old Lyme Congregational church which we all attended as time went on.

You see, my grandfather was the only boy with seven sisters. They used to say, to remember them, Kate, Lid, Matt, Maud (Marian), Phoebe, Nell, Liz, Fan. And Matt was the boy, who was my grandfather. I didn't know some of them. They died before I was old enough to remember them. But Aunt Marian was a wonderful character. She is the one we named our daughter Marian for, because we both liked her so well. She was the housekeeper and always had a big full cookie jar next to the kitchen in the cool room, where they stored the milk and butter. When anybody came, she was prepared to give them some cookies or wonderful gingerbread for refreshment.

Aunt Nellie was a little lady and she seemed always to wear a flowery hat, and to have flowers in her hands. She tended the garden. Aunt Phoebe was very, very deaf and very thin and tall. She sat in a couch in the living room bay window at the front of the house, and used to crochet and knit.

Levenson: Did any of them marry?

Bingham: Two of them married. Aunt Fanny married Matthew Ely, and his son we knew well because he was my father's age. I remember her as white-haired and rather chubby; she was a very nice person. She lived not far away on Old Shore Road in a small hip-roof house with a barn across from what is White Sand Beach now.

Aunt Lydia married Mr. Selden. Their daughter, Grae, married Frederick Chapin, who became an admiral, and their daughter, Lydia, married Alan Kirk who led the naval attack for the invasion of Europe in World War II. Later, Admiral Kirk was our ambassador to Russia-- Aunt Lydia was a talented person. She did sculpture and clay models of little children. She was very interesting. I enjoyed her. She even taught me for a while. She had a house further down the highway than where her sisters lived.

The house that the old aunts had lived in and had been brought up in, was quite old and it was up on a slight rise, overlooking Long Island Sound. The view from there was beautiful. You could see Long Island on a clear day. There was a tennis court where our young cousins used to come and play. They had an old Scottish farmer, Mr. Speirs. He is the one who helped us to learn how to drive his old Model T stationwagon in the fields to bring the cows home in the afternoon. His collie dog also helped round up the cows.

They had chickens too. It was just a very simple little farm, with one barn near the house.

Levenson: Were they much of an influence on you?

Bingham: Yes, I think so, because they used to tell stories. We'd have wonderful Thanksgivings at our house when we'd have the great-aunts and also ask a cousin of ours, Ned and his sister, Lillian Griswold. Lillian was a school teacher, and Ned had a terrific lisp. Very white hair. He looked at me once after we'd come back from China, and he said, "Did you see any white cats in China?" And I said, "No, why?" "Well," he said, "my grandfather was a sea captain and he had a white cat on his ship. They anchored at Canton to trade and the white cat disappeared, and I thought maybe you'd seen him." And I said, "Well, I was in Peking; that's a long ways off. And the only cats we saw were gray ones crawling over our gray-tiled roofs."

He would come over in the evenings sometimes, and Mother had made some dandelion wine, for which we children had picked the dandelion flowers.* I'll end up telling you about that. But he would get a little

*To pick the dandelions we took baskets. But because the flowers were heavy they matted down, and an hour's work showed small results. It kept us occupied for several hours to get enough for Mother. But we children had fun doing it together.

Bingham: dandelion wine which really was like a liqueur, and then his tongue would be more unleashed. So he'd tell us wonderful stories of the old days.

My brother and I had a little, simple printing press, and we used to get out what we called "The Black Hall Reporter," and write up some of his stories and tell a little of the news of our Capital Point.

Levenson: Do you have any copies of that left?

Bingham: I think I found one one time. I'll have to look it up and see if I can find it.

Levenson: Fun.

Bingham: Yes, it was great fun, but it was awfully hard work. We had a little shed where we worked. My brothers had built a row boat and it had a mast and sail in it, and when we were old enough we were able to go out, my brother and I, and sail--take a picnic for the day. So we'd have a great time exploring the salt marshes, little channels that went through the salt marshes near the mouth of the Connecticut River. When we became experienced enough, Father permitted us to sail on the Connecticut River.

There was one story Cousin Ned told about a young man and woman who were very much in love, but the father wouldn't let the girl marry this man. Long years later when the father died, she did marry him, and the young man went and stamped on his grave. He was so mad to have missed all of these years with his nice lady!

My grandfather moved out to Erie, Pennsylvania because he was in the manufacturing business.

Levenson: What did he manufacture?

Bingham: He first had a piano-making business, which failed. He then manufactured cast aluminum and cast iron kitchen utensils. The Griswold pots and pans were well known in the old days. His name was Matthew Griswold. I don't know which Matthew, because there had been several Matthews before him. He had seven sons and one daughter. The tragedy was that his only daughter, on her way to bed, leaned over the banister to say goodnight to her parents, and fell down and was killed. She was only nine years old.

They lived in Erie, Pennsylvania when my father was a child. But he was sent to Black Hall because my aunts lived there, and he lived with them and went to a school which a cousin, Charles Bartlett, had established. His son Charlie was a lifelong friend of of my father's.



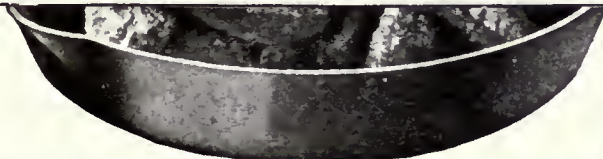
Every woman will thank Griswold for this

HERE'S a cast iron skillet with its own snug-fitting cast iron cover! It makes an all-over wall of slow, steady, perfect heat to cook chicken, Swiss steak, tenderloin, to a wonderful delicacy and flavor. The cover is even-thick like the skillet. It fits. It stays in place. It holds the heat inside, where it belongs. Steam can't lift it or rattle it. Best still, the drip-rings inside the cover collect steam and drip it back over whatever's cooking . . . *self-baste* it. You don't know how richly tender meats can be till they're cooked in a self-basting Griswold Cast Iron Skillet. If you have a Griswold Skillet, you can buy the Cast Iron Cover to fit. Or your hardware, department store or house-furnishing dealer will show you both styles of Griswold Cast Iron and Cast Aluminum Skillets and self-basting covers. The Griswold Mfg. Co., Dept. J-1, Erie, Penna., U. S. A.

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GRISWOLD



"Aunt Ellen" says you don't need a special recipe to cook a tough hen tender as young chicken-breast if you roll it in flour, dot it with butter, and fry it slowly in the perfect heat of the Griswold-lidded Cast Iron Skillet. You don't have to turn it over and over either. That snug, self-basting cover works wonders!



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For the most enjoyable fried chicken ever put on a platter . . . that seethes and luxuriates in good things till it gains an exalted flavor! —ask Aunt Ellen for her recipe for Fried Chicken Louisiane. Address "Aunt Ellen," Dept. 3, The Griswold Kitchen, Erie, Penna.



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GRISWOLD



Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Ads like these in the leading women's magazines are increasing the sales turnover for Griswold Dealers

Displays like these will do everything but wrap up the package and make change

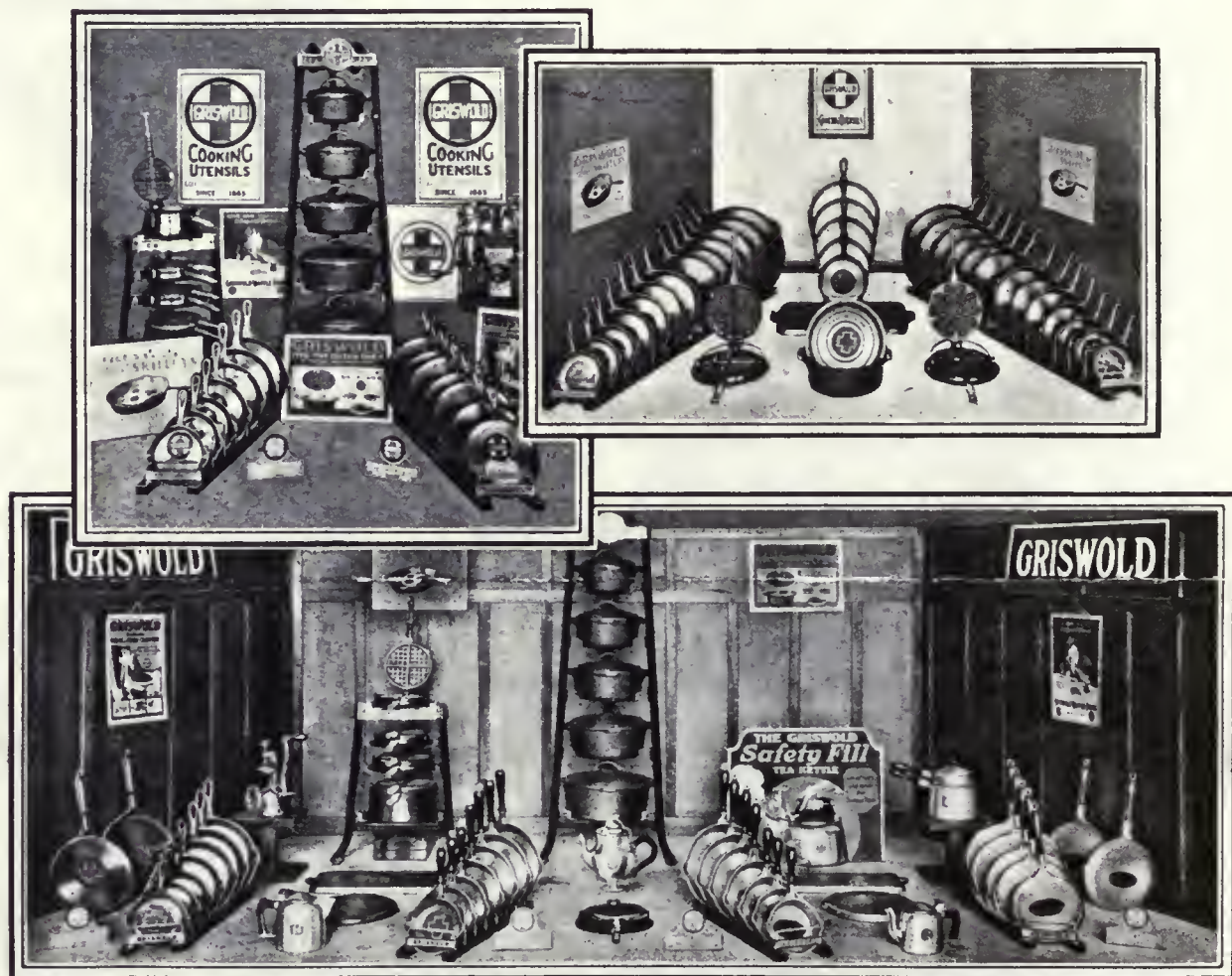
"I certainly could use a good skillet, but somehow or other, in my daily shopping rounds, I never think to ask for one."

There is a statement that is typical of many a housewife.

Women like that, are in the crowds that come into your store, or pass by your windows. There are many things that they would buy—if they thought to ask for them.

And that is the reason why window and counter displays, like the ones shown here, will build your kitchen utensil sales.

They help you to make sales because they remind folks of needed items that are often forgotten. All many people need is a reminder. That is just what these Griswold Displays are—*reminders*—sales-makers that do everything but wrap up the package and make change.



DISPLAY THE FULL GRISWOLD LINE

Many Merchants Have Found Extra Profit in an Exclusive Griswold Section or Booth

Levenson: What was it called? Do you remember?

Bingham: The Black Hall School.

Levenson: Why was your father chosen out of the children to be sent East?

Bingham: I don't know. I suppose because he was the boy.

The others all grew up in Erie and married and lived there. The Griswold family in Erie had a home in town. I don't think I remember that house. But we used to go to visit my grandparents at their country home at the edge of Lake Erie. It was called Ballyhack. It was a big old house that was wooden clapboard. There was an apple orchard in front of it and beyond that, a very steep bank down to Lake Erie. So we'd go swimming in Lake Erie. I can remember going down over a hundred steps to get to the shore. It was the days when we had bandanas on instead of bathing caps. It was a beautiful place. They had a big porch out in front, and on rainy days, that's where we played.

Grandfather had big, bushy, white eyebrows and told all kinds of funny stories. And my grandmother was a very good little housekeeper. She always had a Mrs. Pimer or somebody in the kitchen to help her, because there were lots of relatives around that would come to see them.

Two uncles lived in adjacent houses with their families. One of them was Marvin Griswold and the other one was Matthew Griswold, again carrying the name down. Matthew Griswold became head of the General Electric Company factory in Erie. They used to make steam engines for South America. I remember going to see them. Also refrigerators. Of course later on the factories were all split up so that refrigerators were made elsewhere, and they just made the big engines.

My grandfather was quite a character. Grandmother, I used to enjoy a lot. She taught us to help in the kitchen too a little bit.

Levenson: Sounds like a very happy and cheerful environment.

Bingham: Oh, it was. The young people and their families adjacent to their place used to play tennis a lot.

Levenson: What religion were the Griswolds?

Bingham: I think they were Presbyterians. My father was named after William Edward Schenck who lived at Princeton, New Jersey and was a prominent and popular minister in his time. He was editor of the national Presbyterian publication. His ancestors were among the first settlers

Bingham: who landed at Flushing, New York (now a section of the city). I believe their log cabin is in the Brooklyn Museum. The family eventually moved to New Jersey where they purchased a portion of land owned by Benjamin Franklin. It was the area where Princeton is situated.

Levenson: Religion wasn't an important part of your life then?

Bingham: No, it wasn't an important part. When we went to see them, we didn't go to church.

Parents

Levenson: We're coming up to your father and your mother.

Bingham: My father, as I say, was one of a number of boys. He was the eldest one. My grandfather had married twice, because after his first two children, Matthew and Marvin, his wife had died. Father was the eldest of my real grandmother's children. He was very tall, six feet two, and was an athletic person. He loved to read and play games. He played a good game of tennis; my mother did also.

Levenson: Where did he go to school before Yale?

Bingham: He went to the Black Hall School and I don't know what other schools. Probably local schools in Erie before that. Then he went to Yale and graduated in the class of '99, 1899, and was on the crew. His oar hung in a cottage of ours at Black Hall.

My uncles on Mother's side also went to Yale. So we're all a Yale family.

Levenson: And your mother--what was her name?

Bingham: Mother was Evelyn Sloane. She was of Scottish descent. She wasn't terribly tall, but well proportioned, let's say. She was a good executive. She had a lot of things to tend to. She had a big house in New York and a big house up in Lenox, Massachusetts, which had belonged to my grandfather. He built it--I don't know when exactly; I could find that out. It was on a hilltop in the valley where Stockridge, Lenox, and Pittsfield are located. We could look south to Stockridge and the Berkshire mountains encircled us.

Levenson: How did your parents meet?

1. Mrs. John (Adela Berry) Sloane. Maternal grandmother, c. 1885
2. Mrs. William Edward Schenck (Evelyn) Griswold, mother, in wedding dress, 1907
3. Mrs. Matthew (Annie Brooks) Griswold. Paternal grandmother, c. 1910, with Marvin Griswold, stepson, left, and W.E.S. Griswold, son, right
4. William Edward Schenck Griswold, Sr., father, c. 1924
5. Mrs. William Edward S. (Evelyn Sloane) Griswold, mother, c. 1924



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Bingham: I don't really know. They met in New York. My father had gone to Harvard Law School after Yale. Then his father's business had gone on the rocks. He had started a piano firm, and that did not succeed. When it failed, he could no longer send Father to Harvard. So Father went to the Columbia Law School and graduated from there. He then worked in the office of Mr. Percy Rockefeller. Mother, I suppose, met him through the Rockefellers, because she would have known that family through some of her family in New York.

Levenson: And they were married?

Bingham: In September, 1907. And I was born in June, 1908.

A Happy Childhood

Bingham: The Griswold home was a four-storey brownstone house on Fifth Avenue near Seventieth Street, New York City. It had a generous size. It was four stories high plus a basement. On the fourth storey were the maids' rooms, and there were two more maids' rooms in the basement. In the sub-basement was the heating system that was attached to the city steam heat. We were on the end of the line.

One very cold winter we didn't get any heat, because everybody else was putting their's on so fully. Coal was used for cooking. The big trucks delivered the coal down a chute into the sub-basement. On cold winter nights you could see sparks darting from the steel shoes of the horses' hooves.

The library in our house was designed by a famous interior designer. It was given to the Brooklyn Museum, who were just delighted to have it as an example of a room of those days. When the exhibit of Renaissance furniture came to the de Young Museum of San Francisco, I was looking at the exhibit with a granddaughter of mine and I was going quite slowly because I was quite interested in several pieces that I saw. Suddenly she came running to me and she said, "Wasn't your name Griswold?" I said, "Yes." So she said, "You must come and see this."

I went over with her and here was our old library fireplace with all the beautiful andirons and bronze jars that had been near it. I was so surprised that they would have brought that out.

Levenson: What a wonderful surprise.

Bingham: It was wonderful, yes. Then in a text that I read, it named the man who had been the designer for it. And the fact that the room had some green leather in the ceiling, which I'd never sort of thought about. I remembered green furniture and rugs.

Levenson: That's unusual, isn't it?

Bingham: Oh yes, and it had wonderful bookcases. I remember looking at those. When my family would go out to dinner, I'd come and sit down on the floor and open these glass bookcases, and read stories, or take out some of the Encyclopedia Britannica, which was fascinating. It was unusual to see glassed-in bookcases. That was the room where we'd watch parades on bad days. When the weather was beautiful, we could watch the parades from the third-floor balcony and see the groupings and bands far up and down Fifth Avenue.

Levenson: What sort of collection of books was it?

Bingham: Oh, it was a variety. Mother had been a great reader and I think a lot of the things were hers. I can remember a set of George Eliot. There were sets in those days; people bought books in sets. I don't really know what they all were. I think two of my brothers inherited most of them.

The front stoop (or porch-like stone area) was the area where all our relatives came to see the parades. After World War I, of course, there were a great number more parades welcoming the troops home and the city had built large archways, similar to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, so that it made the parades even more impressive to go marching under these archways. One was about five blocks south of our house; the other one was about fifteen blocks below that.

Levenson: What were they made of?

Bingham: They must have been made of some type of plaster because they didn't last very long. They had strung cut glass in long strings on one of them so that they glittered in the sun. Made it quite dramatic.

We used to go out to the park with our nurse, who was a French-woman, Lea Barbier. She was a tiny little lady with her hair done in a knot up on the top of her head, and very kinky hair. She always wore a white blouse and a nice white apron and a black skirt. She would take off the apron and put on our coats and would go out that way. Then she'd take us out to the park. We wore roller skates across the stoop and down the stairs.

There was always a certain place she'd go because her friends went there. So we played with the children who were charges of her friends rather than where maybe my parents' friends' children were. But it was good fun.

There were hills to slide down. Later on, when we didn't roller skate all afternoon, we would have hoops to bang at and hoops to push down hills and around the curves, and that was quite a trick. One

Bingham: day two little boys came along and stole my new large hoop when it had gotten away from me. They ran away, up over a big rock, and I couldn't go after them because my shoes were slippery, and so they got away with it. I kept asking Santa Claus to bring me another one because I really wanted to have a hoop. But I never got another one.

But we had some nice friends there. We always had to be dressed nicely. We'd go to the park--my sister and I; the next one to me, Adela, would wear the same clothes that I did. We had rose-pink wool coats with little beaver edges on the collar, and had the same color velvet rose-pink hats with brims and a little fur circled around the crown, with a little bear face in the middle of it.

Levenson: Did you have to wear gloves?

Bingham: No, we didn't wear gloves, except in cold weather and for parties or Sunday school, but we did wear white shoes and stockings, and that was terrible to have to keep clean when you were playing! Then later on, when we were a little older, we had nice blue coats. They didn't have the velvet collar and were awfully scratchy. We never had scarves and I can remember hating that coat because it was so uncomfortable.

We had a third sister, and eventually she was dressed as we were. For many years, we all three dressed the same. Finally when I was about fourteen or so, Mother said, "You can each go and buy a dress for yourselves at such-and-such-stores" where she had charge accounts and where the salesladies knew us, because we always got to know a saleslady in the department of children's clothes. So we went and I bought three dresses as she told me I could, and so did each of my sisters. We came home and we found that one of the dresses we bought was exactly the same. So here we were, back all dressed alike occasionally!

Levenson: Now, let's get the children straight. You were born in 1908.

Bingham: Yes, I was born in Greenwich, Connecticut in June, 1908. Then my sister Adela was born, in December, 1909, I suppose in New York City. Of course at home. She was born a year and a half after I came. Then Evelyn was born in June, 1911. She was named after Mother. Evelyn was born a year and a half after Adela. I don't know where she was born.

Levenson: So there were just the three girls, were there?

Bingham: The three girls, and then there were three boys. My brother, Bill --William, Jr., in July, 1912. Oh yes, I didn't tell you my father's name was William Edward Schenck Griswold. They had to get in all those family names. He was the eldest of that family. But my brother Bill's name is also William Edward Schenck Griswold.

Bingham: Then my brother John was born two years after Bill, also in July. He was born up in Lenox. I remember being sent off with my sisters on a drive in the carriage at the time of his birth.

We used to go out for a drive in the carriage in the afternoon there. We'd play hard all morning in our little pine tree place, with the sand box and the swing and the seesaw, and the bar where we could do gymnastics on. Climbing the trees was also part of it. In the afternoons, we'd go riding in a carriage because by then it would be pretty hot. I guess it was a good help to the nurses to have that relief.

One time there was a big thunderstorm and we went down the driveway out onto the road to the village, and all of a sudden a wheel on the carriage fell off, and that was a great calamity. Great excitement, but the horses didn't run away or anything. So somehow they got us out and back up to the house and got the carriage fixed.

Levenson: Then you had one more brother, did you?

Bingham: Oh, yes. My brother Dwight was born in New York, about three years after John.

Servants

Levenson: How many servants were there to look after this crew of six?

Bingham: Oh, I hate to tell you! I think there must have been fifteen. I was counting up the other day. We had three in the kitchen and we had two laundresses. We didn't get a washing machine until well on--I can remember when they installed it, so I must have been ten or twelve. That was a great big old galvanized iron thing, and it rocked back and forth. Made an awful noise. I don't remember when they got anything more modern.

We had a "houseman" named Louis Palowski who attended to all the sub-basement; to sweeping the front stoop and stairs and sidewalk; to shining shoes at night (we left them outside our bedroom doors) and even to taking them to be repaired when necessary, and to making ice cream on Sunday mornings.

Louis was wall-eyed. My brother once asked him why answer was, "I worked on a ship once. We ran into a stor, a wave washed me overboard; the next wave washed me back on the ship. I was so scared, my eyes became this way."

Bingham: He married the cook, Anna, and they were later moved to Black Hall, Old Lyme where he mowed the lawn instead of tending the city house. He also moved beds. There seemed always to be different arrangements to be made as we children grew up or guests came and went, and there were different sleeping accommodations necessary. My parents built a small house at the back of ours for Louis and Anna. It was called "the Squeeze Box" because he played the accordion well and taught several children and our daughter Anne to play.

The other noisy operation I remember in New York was the Sheffield Farms horse-drawn milk delivery early in the morning when the wagon with its metal milk cans and crates of bottles rattled and stopped at our house.

We children used to rush to the bay windows of the library to watch the fire engines rush by, steam pouring out of the big central boiler which I presume pumped water for the fire extinguishers. The horse's hooves made quite a clatter as they came down Fifth Avenue (then a granite cobblestone street). On cold winter nights you could see sparks darting from the steel shoes of the horses' hooves.

Then we had one nurse for the girls and one nurse for the boys. They were both French. Many of the other people we had were Irish people. And the French Protestants and the Irish didn't see eye to eye much, because the Irish were all Catholics. I can remember my nurse telling me that an Irish Catholic could never look you in the eye. So one day when I got quite cross with one of the maids, I said to her, "Well, I know what's the matter with you. You can't look a person straight in the eye." Of course, that didn't make any good kind of feeling.

Levenson: Weren't your French nurses Catholic?

Bingham: No, they were Protestant. They belonged to L'Eglise Francaise down on Fourteenth Street, and we would be allowed to go with them to their big fair once a year. That was a tremendous treat because it was so different from anything else we did. And they were all such friendly people. We'd been brought up to speak a lot of French and could converse with them.

There was one lady there who always made a certain kind of a cookie, brisselet. That was much desired. It was quite rich but very delicious and crisp.

Levenson: So we've got three in the kitchen, two laundresses, two nurses-- What about the rest of the staff?

Bingham: There were two chairs in the bay windows, and those were much occupied morning and times when the fire engines came. In the morning, we used to watch who went down the street. Many people walked to business, and some children going to school. There was a nice old gentleman who would always stop by for us. We'd go down to Fifty-Fifth Street where I went to Spence School.

Levenson: Let's go back to the staff. We've got the ice cream maker. Did you have a butler?

Bingham: We had a butler and a second man. After the First World War, there was a butler and a maid. Then we had a chauffeur and his assistant. They had to keep the cars in repair. No mechanics from outside came. They drove us and my mother. And we had one upstairs maid and one downstairs maid. The downstairs maid used to help in the pantry, where a butler was the boss!

Levenson: I guess that adds up to fourteen!

Bingham: It seems like a tremendous number nowadays, good gracious, but on the other hand, then you didn't have all the machines that you have now in the house.

I guess they got on pretty well, at least as far as we could ever see. Mother would sit in the library in the morning and each one would come to get their orders for the day. So she really had to be a manager. When I think now about all the women who talk about their businesses, seems to me my mother was one of the first businesswomen among the ones that were of her day. Good housekeepers. Because they had such a lot of responsibility. Handling all these people that had to work for them to keep the establishments going, and then manage the children and their education, and their clothing. It wasn't like today when it was much easier to get things done. You had to do a great deal of personal planning.

Levenson: Did she keep her supplies locked up?

Bingham: No, she didn't do that. She trusted the people and made each one who was head in that part, like the chief cook lady, responsible for the things. Then she knew also about how much got ordered each week. She tended to all the accounts, too.

Later, when I was in my teens, she had a secretary who helped her, but I don't remember anyone helping her in the beginning. So I really hand it to my mother.

Levenson: Where did you eat? Were you confined to the nursery to eat nursery meals?

Bingham: No, we weren't. We ate in the dining room. We had a table over at the side of the dining room. And in New York, we had a special little side room, which had plants in it at one end and a dining table at the other, and mirrors. We could see ourselves eating. I don't know if that was a good thing to do. It was a pretty messy process.

Levenson: You didn't eat with your parents then?

Bingham: We had breakfast with my parents, and we had lunch with Mother. But in the evening, my parents ate by themselves.

Education

Levenson: What about your education?

Bingham: Oh, I went to Spence School kindergarten in the little building next to the big school, on Fifty-fifth Street. Some of the friends I made then, I'm still in touch with now.

Levenson: That's wonderful.

Bingham: We had some good teachers. But I had a terrible time learning how to spell. They had big papers on a rack and they would flip these pages over. "Always" was a word I never could spell. There were a couple of others. They'd flip these different words over and ask us to say them, read them, and then learn how to spell them.

And we had arithmetic. I don't think we got any kind of exercise except walking to school, because we were picked up and taken home in a car. Father would walk us to school with our roller skates on, and we'd be ready to go when he was ready. We'd go down to Fifty-fifth Street.

In the afternoon, of course, we'd get out in the park and that was exercise. But it certainly wasn't anything like your children get nowadays.

Levenson: Was it all girls?

Bingham: Yes, Spence School was all girls then. It still is, as a matter of fact. It's been moved up to Ninetieth Street. They have a beautiful school there.

Bingham: We used to be sent, when we were older, to the Young Women's Christian Association on Lexington Avenue at Fifty-second Street. The New York YWCA did have swimming lessons and a gymnasium. Then we had sort of an exercise class at school with dumbbells and this big stick that we held up over our heads, back and forth, and do different patterns with it, which stretched our back muscles.

Levenson: It sounds very progressive.

Bingham: I suppose it was in its day. It sounds funny nowadays.

Levenson: When did you start school?

Bingham: I started school when I was about five years old, at kindergarten. left there to go to Foxcroft School when I was fifteen.

Religion and Cousin Henry Sloane Coffin

Bingham: Then we would go to church in New York.

We always had pancakes Sunday morning. I can remember I wasn't allowed to have pancakes till I was nine years old. When my youngest brother came along, and he was only seven, and we were all furious at him--the older ones--because we didn't think that was fair at all, that he could have had pancakes that much younger than we did. Can you imagine being so silly about it?

Levenson: Oh, very much so! But why weren't you allowed pancakes 'til you were nine? (laughs)

Bingham: I can't imagine. I suppose they were thought of as indigestible. Anyway, Sunday we'd go to church and Sunday school. I remember being in a class with my sister and there were little boys there too, which was unusual for us because we attended a girls' school.

The discussion came about the children of Israel, and one of the little boys was kind of a mischief, and he told his teacher, yes, he knew about the children of Griswold. Was this the same thing?

Levenson: What denomination was this?

Bingham: This was Presbyterian. It was the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. My cousin, Henry Sloane Coffin, was the minister there.

Levenson: He was a man of great distinction, wasn't he?

Bingham: Yes, he was.

Levenson: What can you tell me about him?

Bingham: He was a very wonderful man. Tall and fine, and he'd been a very close friend and pal of my mother's as they grew up as children, because his mother and my grandfather were sister and brother. Her name was Euphemia, and we always called her Auntie Phe. That was his mother--Euphemia Sloane Coffin. Her husband was Edmund Coffin, and I think he was a lawyer. They used to live down on West Fifty-seventh Street in a nice old brownstone house; Fifty-seventh Street was a very fashionable street. The Roosevelts had built houses on the Fifth Avenue side. Also Mr. Vanderbilt had a big house there.

We'd go to the Coffins for Sunday lunch occasionally, two of us at a time. And Auntie Phe always used to give us a soup cup that had a picture in the bottom so that we'd drink up our soup to see what was there. Otherwise she had trouble having us children drink soup.

Then when they moved up to Seventy-third at Fifty-seventh Street, I think it was, they had a beautiful carving over their mantelpiece and they took that with them. My cousin Will Coffin, the brother of Henry Sloane, was a prankster and lots of fun. He would come to the dining table with us all and in the napkins would be a roll. Instead of carefully putting the roll on the table and his napkin in his lap, he took the napkin and he flipped it in such a way that the roll flew up in the air and he'd catch it again. Of course, that always created a lot of laughs.

Levenson: What do you remember of--

Bingham: Henry?

Levenson: Yes, of his sermons, for example.

Bingham: The only thing I remember, not particularly subjects he got on, but I remember my family discussing the fact that he was rather a radical in his day. Because he was quite critical of some of the big business enterprises that were growing up in those years, I suppose it was the 1920s--before the crash. He was critical of that. And he made a point of having in his parish people from the

Bingham: East Side, who were poor people, as well as the people from Fifth Avenue. Many people criticized him for that, but we thought it was a pretty good idea.

He was always very genial and friendly. I don't know what else I could say about him. [pauses] He had a great deal of poise and was a dynamic preacher. He later became president of Union Theological Seminary.

Levenson: He must have needed it to manage such a diverse congregation.

Bingham: Oh, yes.

In those days they had reserved pews. I don't remember what our pew number was, but you had a numbered pew and you paid for it --so much per year. After a while my family decided that was not democratic, so they gave up having this numbered pew that they paid for, and we sat up in the gallery. It was more interesting, because you could look down on the people and see what they were doing, and you'd get a better view of the whole altar and the ministers.

There was a nice organ. I think my parents had given that in memory of my uncle Will Sloane who died after the First World War. Both my Uncle Jack and Mother had contributed to it. Uncle Jack went to the Episcopal church because his wife was a strong Episcopalian. It was the Church of the Heavenly Rest. My mother and father had another name for that; I don't remember what it was. It was sort of a takeoff.

It was on Fifth Avenue at Ninetieth Street. Ninetieth Street was just considered country practically when I was a child. Mother and Father had few friends up there. I remember their saying what a crazy place to build a house, up on Ninetieth Street. So far away from everything. Which now seems ridiculous.

Music and Dancing Lessons: Knickerbocker Greys for the Boys

Levenson: Did you have music lessons?

Bingham: We went to the Mannes Music School and studied instrument playing there.

Levenson: What were your instruments?

Bingham: I played the piano when I was very little, because Mother had a piano teacher, Mr. Ulysses Buhler up in Lenox. He was a darling old man and I just loved learning from him. Later, I learned to play the violin, and I had as teacher Miss Woodsworth at the Mannes School.

My sister, Adela, was wonderful. She was a much better pupil than I was. Her teacher was the man who was the concert master at the New York Philharmonic, and so she got way ahead. But it didn't bother me that she played better, because I always enjoyed playing the second violin. We finally had a little family orchestra.

My father, as a lawyer, had settled a case for a music store, and they couldn't pay him, so they gave him a cello which he put in the attic. When my brothers began to learn the cello, then he took some lessons. We really had a great time. Mother played the piano and Father the cello, and two brothers played the cello. Let's see, my sister and I played the violin; one of my brothers also. My sister, Evelyn, the younger one, played the cello.

Levenson: Sounds marvelous!

Bingham: We sang a lot together, too. Old country songs and southern songs, and hymns, and we had a wonderful time in the family.

Father was a great reader in the evening. When I got older, I would do needlework with Mother, and Father would read aloud to us Foreign Affairs and the Atlantic Monthly. And we always had the Illustrated London News to look at.

In the First World War, I was always so horrified at the pages of pictures of young men who'd been killed in the war--that made a tremendous impression on me. I couldn't have been more than eight or ten at the time, but it really made a big impression. And battleships, which now look so ridiculously small and inadequate, were pictured.

Then--that's further on; I think I'd better wait. Going at fifteen to Europe and seeing the battlefields.

Levenson: Did you have other private lessons? How did you learn manners?

Bingham: Oh no, we didn't have any formal training in manners. My mother taught us things. She would see that we behaved and so did Father. That we held our forks and knives all right. Even our nurses used to correct us about that.

Levenson: What about dancing school?

Bingham: Oh, dancing school. That's a whole other thing. We used to go to the Dodsworth Dancing School. Mr. Dodsworth would stand in the middle of the room. When we came in we'd go downstairs, and the girls went to one part; the boys to another, to change their shoes because we had to wear dancing slippers. Little Mary Janes for us girls, and nice dresses, of course.

We had then to walk up a staircase at the far end of the dance room and curtsy or bow to Mr. Dodsworth, and then Mrs. Dodsworth, sitting at a little gold desk at the far end of the room, would keep track of us all. The girls sat on red plush seats on one side and the boys on the opposite side of the room.

On the floor--it was a parquet floor--there were squares, and you had to put your feet just so beside the squares so that your toes pointed out. Then we'd sit in our seats and the boys would have to ask us to dance. First we'd have a lesson on waltz or whatever he was going to teach us. I don't even remember the names of various steps. Then we'd take our seats and the boys would invite us to dance with them, and they'd have to see us back to our seats. Then, if we did very nicely, Mrs. Dodsworth would beckon to us to come over and she would give us a blue ribbon to pin on our dresses, to show that we had done nicely that time. It had the golden rule on it: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And I would love to earn that but I didn't know what that had to do with dancing school, but that was the rule--teaching courtesy, I suppose.

Levenson: How old were you when you started that?

Bingham: I don't remember. I think I must have been nine or ten, at least.

Levenson: And it went on until you were--?

Bingham: I suppose till I went to boarding school. But I think when we were older we didn't go as much.

Levenson: And the boys went without protest, did they?

Bingham: Oh, I don't think so. I think they hated it. I know my brothers objected strenuously. I don't think they went for very long. They went to a thing called the Knickerbocker Greys. My mother was very active in helping that continue. They always had an army man who had some distinction, as a manager for that. They marched and they had a little band. My brothers learned the cornet, so you can imagine the din that made when they practiced at home.

Levenson: Was this a sort of military training?

Bingham: Yes, it taught them to stand up straight and all. But they also learned a bit of judo in it at one point. I can remember one time when my brother, Bill, who wasn't more than about twelve or fourteen--Father came home and he took Father around the neck and tossed him down on the floor. He'd learned some trick way of doing this.

Levenson: How did your father respond?

Bingham: I don't think he liked it, do you?

Levenson: No. (laughing)

Foxcroft Boarding School, in Virginia, 1923-1926

Levenson: You said you went to boarding school.

Bingham: Yes.

Levenson: When was that?

Bingham: In the fall of 1923, when I was fifteen.

Levenson: And where was it?

Bingham: It was down in Virginia, at Middleburg, but in the country. My mother and a friend of hers from Lenox decided they wanted their girls to know something about the South, because we were northerners and we'd been brought up there, and they felt we should know about the South. So they looked around at schools and they decided on Foxcroft, because they liked Miss Charlotte Noland who was the head of it.

So here I was, used to a family atmosphere and my old school friends from many years, sent down to a school where I didn't know a single soul. I was the first one from Spence School to go there. I hadn't known much about any life at boarding school, and Mother didn't prepare me much.

So I was sent off with my trunk of clothing and told to carry on. I roomed with a southern girl and a girl from New York City whom I'd never known before. We did a lot of riding. I used the school horses because I didn't have a horse to take down. Later on my two sisters did get a horse. But it was a good experience.

Bingham: It's beautiful country. It was in the Blue Ridge Mountains. We had a lovely time. But the first year was agony.

Levenson: Were you very homesick?

Bingham: I was homesick, but I didn't know what homesick was, and I don't think I fitted in very easily. But I played the basketball games that we were scheduled to do and did the riding when I was supposed to. Then in the spring, I got a frightful case of poison ivy. I was quite sick with it, actually. Finally Mother came down and took me home so that the doctor could give me a different medication and have me get over it more swiftly.

Levenson: How did you do academically? Was your preparation good?

Bingham: My preparation was good. I was usually, on the whole, a middle sort of student. I wasn't one of the top notch ones, though in my early years at Spence School I earned very good marks.

Levenson: What subjects did you enjoy most?

Bingham: I loved music and the arts, and French and history. Some of the science fascinated me, but I wasn't very good at that. And the outdoors things were so different than what I'd had in New York City. I thought that was great.

Levenson: What did you learn about the South? Did you find that part valuable once you got used to the school?

Bingham: Oh, yes. I think we learned through the things that we did. We celebrated Halloween, we celebrated different holidays in a nice way, and they had a big fox hound basketball game. But I learned a lot through the Southern students and dealing with the servants who were there, because they were so different than the Irish and French that we'd had. I was appalled at the place they had to live. Small wooden houses crowded together.

Levenson: What was the attitude in your family to Blacks?

Bingham: I don't remember any around New York in those days.

Levenson: Do you think that's a good place to stop for today?

Bingham: Yes, I think so.

Bingham: Miss Charlotte Noland was still there when I graduated although she'd been very sick that spring, and everyone was worried that she wouldn't live, but she pulled through beautifully. She was such a wonderful person to be head of a girls' school. She always had little conferences with us--up in her sitting room, which was above the main living room in the brick house, the main house of the school.

Levenson: How many girls were there?

Bingham: There were about 70 girls in the school. They were all boarders at that time, I believe. Now they have some day pupils.

Levenson: Were you expected to do anything like make your beds, or were you looked after?

Bingham: No. There were black maids to do that. Keziah cared for the porch house. At that time we were expected to earn money during Lent to give to the poor people in Virginia. I did sewing, and some girls made sandwiches for the recess, so that instead of having milk and crackers, we could buy sandwiches for a small sum. There were lots of other different things that girls did, but Miss Noland wanted us to be conscious of the needs of the community. She was a very well-rounded, wonderful person.

We'd have individual sessions with her and she would ask us about any problems we might have and what we expected to do and other questions of growing up, but mostly she was interested in us and our personal lives.

Levenson: Did girls go from Foxcroft then to universities? Was that expected?

Bingham: A few did. No, it wasn't expected, necessarily. Some of my friends went to Bryn Mawr, and I don't know where the others went. They gave separate examinations for Bryn Mawr in those days. Not the college boards. And the school had to guarantee a certain number of students taking those exams. One girl got sick and couldn't take hers, so they asked me if I would mind taking a French exam so that they would have the right number of girls.

I'd had French all my life, but of course, it was from women who had come from rather peasant backgrounds. But I was tutored at school for two weeks and I got through with a seventy-something. That was very lucky because years later I went up to Columbia to take a course and I had to have had some college examination. But I won't go into that now.

Bingham: Let's see, we were talking about Miss Charlotte. She was a great horsewoman and she rode with the Middleburt Hunt. Some of the better girls at riding were able to go along too. Once a year, near Thanksgiving, they had a meet at the school, and I was always very excited to see all these well-dressed people and groomed horses coming to the school, with the hounds. They'd start off from there.

Some of us could go in a little station wagon and follow the hunt, over the hills and see from the hills which way they were going down in the vales.

Levenson: Were they hunting foxes, or was it a drag hunt?

Bingham: Yes, they were hunting foxes. Yes, and Miss Charlotte's good friends, the Sands, had a beautiful house across the way from ours, from the school. Vacations, they would ask a few of the girls to come over.

Levenson: You were going to tell me about some of your riding.

Bingham: Yes. We went riding practically every day; not every day. I didn't have my own horse. Some girls did. But the horses for the school were pretty good.

In the spring, if you were a good enough rider and you'd done enough riding during the year, you could go on the long three-day ride to Luray, where there was a wonderful cavern, and visit the cavern. We stayed overnight at an inn there, two nights, and we'd have a picnic on the way.

Levenson: Did anyone ride side-saddle?

Bingham: I think there was one girl who did. She came from Canada, and later married a Scotsman. But for most of us, it was a regular English saddle. Some of the girls went over to a very fancy tailor to have their costumes made at Upperville, but we went up to New York and got them at Altman's, probably. I always had fat legs, so I had to have a piece put up the back of my boots, which was a nuisance.

It was beautiful country to ride in. The trouble was, in the spring there was a lot of poison ivy all over the walls. One year I got a terrible case of poison ivy all over my face, because it was a very windy day and the blossoms were out. I must have gotten pollen from that over on my face, and it spread. I was very miserable for several weeks. But the rides were just wonderful. I always enjoyed going.

They also had some pony carts, and we were allowed to take those out and drive them, two girls at a time.

Levenson: It sounds lovely. Did you have any obligations in the stable?

Bingham: No, we didn't. They had black men as grooms, and the servants in the place were all black people. Some of them were very, very nice. They were all good but there were a few that we'd get to know particularly--the girl who'd do our rooms.

I roomed with a Southern girl and a girl from New York my first year. Then the second year three of us were asked to please room with a girl who was having a lot of difficulty because she'd been brought up in a very wealthy household; didn't know how to do anything for herself. So we were supposed to be sort of watchkeepers and help this poor girl.

I had to pack her trunk. Imagine taking a trunk home at Christmas, but that's what it was. I helped her pack her trunk and found all these pairs of stockings she'd taken from other girls. This was a perfectly shocking thing.

Levenson: How strange.

Bingham: Yes, very strange, but she was a very unsettled person, as I realized later.

I think it was quite a surprise to many of us to suddenly leap from home life into a school. But it was a great experience. Especially with somebody like Miss Charlotte who really cared about each of us.

A New York Debut

Bingham: Then after the school years, I came out in New York City, and that was another tremendous experience. We had had to have dancing --a little bit of dancing at school--not much, but then Miss Charlotte taught us to do the court curtsy, in case we ever had to use it.

One time Mother and I were invited to go to meet Marie, the Queen of Rumania, and that was the only time I've ever used that court curtsy. It was a very gala occasion. She wasn't very popular, I think.

Levenson: Can you describe the court curtsy?

Bingham: Yes. It's your regular curtsy. You put your left foot behind the right one. But you had to go way down on that left knee and bend your right knee, and then come up again. It was not very easy to do. Meanwhile, you were shaking hands with whoever you were greeting, so that you could easily get out of balance, but fortunately I managed to keep my balance.

Levenson: What was involved in coming out in New York in--what year would this be?

Bingham: It was the 1927 Season. You were on the list of a social secretary who kept track of who the girls were who were coming out, and the young men that they would invite. She had a list of the young men too, but mostly it was girls. You were invited from that list. Other people would look at it and make up dinner parties or dances. Or else, you would have a dinner party before a dance and could consult the secretary about who was included in the dance invitations.

We went to these big dances in the hotels, mostly. A few were held in the home. My coming out party was at home. We were always chaperoned. Either a maid would go along, or in my case, sometimes a maid went but mostly I was called for by the chauffeur, Macmillan, who worked for my family for many years. He was always there when I was taken home, whether a young man asked to accompany me or not.

Levenson: How many people were invited to your coming out ball?

Bingham: I think probably about a hundred. But they didn't stay for very long.

Levenson: What were the hours of this? You went to a dinner party first--

Bingham: You'd go to a dinner party first, and say you'd be invited for 7:30, you'd never get there before eight o'clock, at least. It's a very bad habit, because it's been hard for me all my life to be on time, because this kind of gave us a leeway to be ready.

The dinners were very elaborate, some of them.

Levenson: How many courses?

Bingham: You know, I don't really remember what we had, but it was regular hotel fare, I suppose, about four or five courses. And no wine was served because it was still Prohibition times.

Levenson: Then the ball would start.

Bingham: And then the ball would start. I don't know--probably nine o'clock or so. And the people would come straggling in. Always the hostess and the girl she was entertaining for would stand in the doorway and receive us. Then in the center of the room were the stags, these young men all nicely dressed. You'd meet their friends sometimes. Then you'd have supper, late, late, probably midnight. That varied a great deal.

In the homes, you didn't have supper, as I remember it. Sometimes we'd even leave the dance and go to Childs or somewhere, and have some scrambled eggs and English muffins. That was always a great treat if somebody asked you to do that.

Levenson: About when did the ball end formally?

Bingham: Midnight or an hour later. A few lasted longer but I did not!

Levenson: Did you enjoy it--the whole process?

Bingham: I was always awfully scared. I was so afraid that I wasn't going to be popular enough to have enough partners to dance with. So that was painful. One evening I spent a lot of time in the ladies coat room where the chaperone maids waited.

I enjoyed some of the things about it very much. It was great fun. Now as I look back on it, I think I enjoyed it more than I did at the time, because it was a wonderful experience to make you get out and meet people and know how to talk with them, even though you'd never seen them before. Also the decorations and dresses were beautiful; the music of the best, and the guests attractive.

Levenson: Were country weekends part of the season?

Bingham: No, not really. What my mother did two years was to have a house party at Christmastime, during my Foxcroft junior and senior years, and we'd each invite a friend or two of ours. I invited my cousin and one of my school friends, and they would invite a beau, or if they didn't Mother or I would find another fellow for them, so that we'd be an even number of boys and girls. Young men I should say, because they were not boys.

We went up to this place that my family had in Lenox, that Mother had bought from my uncle. My uncle had built a very beautiful house at Mount Kisco, New York, and he had inherited the place up there, but Mother finally bought it from him. The Lenox place was big; the Greenwich place was very small, in comparison.

We went up there and stayed in a farmer's cottage, of all things. The big house was much too large and expensive to heat in the winter. So we stayed in the farmer's house. We had sleds and

Bingham: ice skates; of course everybody brought their ice skates. On part of the property, there was a little pond near the woods, and we'd go ice skating there and play hockey. It was marvelous fun. We could slide down the hills on our sleds. One of the lawns was on a big hill, and in summer, we used to have toy automobiles with pedals to push to make them go. We just pushed up the down pedals so as not to use them, and we'd go down that hill, lickety cut, on these small toy automobiles. But the pushing up was something to do on a hot day.

To go on with the winter weekends that we had up in the country, the Christmas holiday time, we even got the horse hitched up to a sled once and tied our sleds to the back, or had somebody hold them, and we'd be dragged along on the roads. That was great fun. A big farm sled partly filled with hay, met us at the station at Lee, Massachusetts.

I had one pair of skis that had belonged to Father. I put them on and started to go down the hill, and all the old straps broke. So I landed in the snow with the skis. But it was great sport. And such beautiful country.

The Summer Circuits

Bingham: We would go from New York to Greenwich for a few weeks in spring and fall. We stayed there, and we also had to pack up things to go to Lenox, Massachusetts. Lenox was a big house, and we were there for all the rest of the summer months.

So, it was a great operation, you can imagine. We had trunks to pack and my mother used to send the silver from New York up to Lenox. It's unbelievable in these days that you'd have a small trunkful of silver to send on a train! And they also packed up linen in another box, and my mother's clothes in a trunk. There was always a big place in the trunk for hats.

We children were allowed to send a certain number of books. Some of it was required summer reading and some of it was just stories we wanted to have. We had children's trunks, too, so that we could all have our clothes with us. Well, once my sister's trunk arrived but inside, it was nothing but wooden blocks! They'd taken all her clothes out and put the wood in to make it appear to be full! So that was the beginning of our being a little more careful about how the baggage was sent.

Bingham: I don't think it's a funny story, but up in Lenox one evening, somebody took all the silver off the dining table. They suspected it was a butler that we had that none of us liked very well. It included my grandfather's silver mug that my brother had, and all the children's silver that we used to use. This was a great trouble to all of us.

Levenson: You were going to tell me more about the farm in Greenwich.

Bingham: Oh, yes. Well, the farm in Greenwich was on Clapboard Ridge. It's still there, the same house, the same looks. It was a white wooden house with a big porch all along the side of it, and the front door was exactly in the middle of the house. Mother had a beautiful garden. I can remember walking among the iris when I was just about the same height as the blooms, and smelling these wonderful iris.

Then there was a great big pergola with wisteria over it. I'd climb up that and loved to jump down off it. I don't know what was the great attraction, but that seemed to be something at that age that was fun. That was when I was about eleven years old.

Then up above the house and to the west was a stable. The man who was our coachman and head of the stable had been my grandmother's stable boy, Claude Delahaye. He had somebody helping him, and they kept the place immaculately cleaned and polished the harnesses, and it smelled so good. We'd go riding down the little road to a reservoir most of the time. Next door neighbors to the west, unfortunately where the wind came from, was a rather not well-to-do family who had a lot of goats, and they had the goats all tied up on the lawn. And they were rather a nuisance.

We had chickens and pigs and cows. In the autumn we had the apples to make cider. Every weekend that was a great thing to do. We'd have cider making. I think my parents used to invite relatives or friends to come visit, because I can remember one time we had a cousin who make beautiful little scenes of outdoors for the natural history museum. He wanted to collect some frogs, because he needed to make some frogs to put in one of these scenes.

We got a big pail full of them, and unfortunately brought them in the house, and they all got out. So the next morning we were all scrambling around to pick up the frogs for him.

Levenson: When you made cider, how did you crush the apples?

Bingham: Mother always sorted the apples, as these big baskets of apples were brought to us. She'd only put the good ones in. She said some people put any kind of apples in, but she didn't want wormy apples in her cider. There was a regular press and it had a big bin that you threw these into. Father would turn the crank that chopped up the apples,

Bingham: and the chopped-up apples fell into a tub that had slats, and you had lined it already with a nice clean piece of gauze or cheesecloth of some sort. When the tub was full, you put the ends of the cheesecloth over the top and then put a wooden top on it, and then it went into a press and the press squeezed all the juice out. I don't remember what the juice was collected in, probably a pail or a pitcher of some sort. Then it was put into jugs.

Of course, every now and then, one would get old and alcoholic. We didn't like the taste of that, but I suppose some people would have. But sweet cider was just a great treat. Couldn't drink too much of it, as we all discovered.

Levenson: Upset your stomach?

Bingham: Yes. But I always remember that wonderful smell of squashed apples in the bottom of the hay barn, because that's where we did it. My children area always telling me that some of those things nobody nowadays knows about because they don't have the hay barns, and they don't do their own apple pressing.

I thought about that farm the last few days. It seemed to me it was very self-sufficient, because they used the straw from the grain, what little there was in there, to keep the stables clean under the horses and the cows. Then, of course, that went into the manure pile and that, in turn, went back onto the fields and in the gardens after a time of composting. So that nowadays ideas about ecology are not all that new. They were thinking a lot about it in those days.

We had our own well and our own pump. Of course, the pigs were some of our food. And the chickens were not only pretty--they had Leghorns and Rhode Island Reds, but we had our own eggs--and a few Japanese fowl with pretty long feathers, even over their eyes. Then I remember one time I was taking my big tall cousin from Erie, Pennsylvania, to see this farm. I went to pick up a little baby chick that was so soft and pretty, and the mother hen saw me and started to fly at me, and my cousin picked me up and held me up on his shoulder. They can be very fierce, those old mother hens.

We used to take drives in our carriage. I think I mentioned that in my last interview with you. We'd go down to the village of Greenwich, and the nurses would come along. The man at the grocery store would give them a box of candy. That always, later, seemed to me a good way of encouraging people to come and do their business there.

But people were so kind and thoughtful in those days. And it was such fun to go in that carriage. Most of them were two-seater. It had sort of a fringe around the top of the roof.

Levenson: So, not too many of you could fit in at one time.

Bingham: Let me see. It would hold three on a seat easily because we were small children, and I think the coachman and two or three of us could sit in the front. I think only two of us could. He didn't want to have to watch us too carefully. Then we took the nurse to the girls, Lea Barbier, and the nurse for the boys would sit in the back seats with the boys, I guess.

Levenson: How many horses to pull it?

Bingham: It could be just two horses.

Levenson: That sounds wonderful.

Bingham: My mother, years before, had learned how to drive a four-in-hand. She went to Paris and even drove through those very narrow arches in the Louvre.

Levenson: That's quite something for a woman!

Bingham: She was quite an accomplished sportswoman. She'd play tennis with these long skirts and a hat on, and a veil around her neck, because you weren't supposed to get sunburned in those days. When we went motoring, she always wore a veil around her hat, and a dustcoat, because the roads were so terribly dusty.

I read a book not long ago about that era, and the lady who wrote it remembered all the names of the different kinds of automobiles that were being driven, which is more than I remember. I think one of our first cars was a Stoddard Dayton, which you don't hear of anymore. We had a little Peugeot car that my parents bought, and it was just a tiny, little, open car. That lasted for years. They kept getting new parts for the engine. It was very hard to get the tires because they were so different from any made in this country.

Levenson: You wanted to add something here.

Bingham: Yes, just to reminisce. I spoke of the Stoddard Dayton. Later we had a Pierce Arrow. One of the things I always remember was, when we took a drive, if a thunderstorm came up there was a great scurry, because they didn't have windows that you wound up; they had curtains that you had to snap on. So the curtains would have to be taken out of the pocket in the doors and snapped on in the right places. Of course, if the wind was blowing hard, the rain would get blown in between the curtains also. But it made quite a commotion when you had to do this.

Bingham: Mother would drive the Peugeot around. It was a great help, instead of a bicycle, you see. She could take it up to the stable and tell people what to do, or down to the farm. Then, somehow, it would travel up to Lenox. The trip to Lenox was always quite an hegira, because there were so many of us to move.

The trunks had to be packed up again for Lenox. We'd leave New York the end of May or the beginning of June for Greenwich. Then we'd go by the first of July to Lenox, after my birthday which for many years we tried to celebrate with my cousin, Margaret Sloane, who was born the same day and lived in Mount Kisko, New York. But the trouble was, there was always a big thunder storm that came and prevented them from coming, because they were so afraid the roads would be too bad.

Levenson: Silly.

Bingham: The horses, of course, would be moved up to Lenox also. That required poor Claude to spend a night in the freight car with the horses going up. I don't know how they got the horses to the freight car.

Levenson: How many horses, about?

Bingham: I'd say about four. Finally one year I was given a horse, a nice little Arab horse that I enjoyed riding so much. She was quite a lively one compared to the quiet, older ones I'd been riding, and my sisters had the others to ride. We went almost every day.

I remember one time I didn't go for several days and Mother said she was going to give the horse away. I said, "If you do that, I'll wear purple all the time." [laughter]

Levenson: Why was that a threat?

Bingham: I remembered an old aunt of mine who always wore purple after her husband died and I thought, well, I'd feel like I was in mourning. Of course, I never stopped to think who would buy the purple!

During the First World War, we were up in Lenox, and my mother organized a canning kitchen in the high school, and went down to Connecticut College to take a course because she'd heard about it, to learn how to do canning in great quantity.

I remember down in our little log cabin, which was kind of a playhouse in the woods, we used to make jam and jelly, and we thought it was all going to France to the men, but instead I sent a note in one of the buckets one day on top of the paraffin wax, between the paraffin wax and the lid, and a note came back from a soldier in one of the camps in Maryland. Mother was so distressed, because she thought we were sending all these things to the boys in Europe!

Levenson: How did you get on with your brothers and sisters?

Bingham: I got on pretty well with them. I guess I was kind of a tempestuous person at times. I only remember one time when I got terribly angry with one of my brother's nurses, because she was trying to even something out. Our croquet games were a little bit contentious sometimes. On the whole, we had a very good time together. It was partly because I think my parents were always sort of jolly and able to humor us along instead of scold us.

We seldom got scolded, that I can remember. Though I do remember one time I got naughty in New York and Mother took the back of a hairbrush and spanked me. That was a big shock. But I remembered it, so I was pretty careful after that.

Levenson: How old were you, about?

Bingham: Oh, I guess I must have been about eight years old then. But I had a lot of trouble with my ears and colds and things, and I guess sometimes I got cranky on that account.

Levenson: Were you generally well, apart from that?

Bingham: Oh yes. I had a long time being ill one summer because the infection from my ears had affected other parts of me. Mother had a special governess who stayed with me so that I'd stay quiet. She read lots of French to me. We always spoke French because that was our nurse's language and it was a great thing we could. She read to me from La Famille Librarie Rose books. I think we went through the whole series of them. Then also from--oh, who was the man who wrote those imaginative books? Jules Verne. We read Jules Verne books--maybe more than one--I don't remember.

We used to go down to this little log cabin in Lenox. My family had built a little log cabin like a playhouse. But it was even more than that. They put in cooking equipment and a table. Then they had a big table built out in the woods on a flat base, with benches. We used to have picnic lunch there sometimes.

There was a big swing on the porch, and I lay in that swing while the nurse read to me. Then we also had a hayfield right outside that building, and we used to walk in the hayfield. To the distress of the farmer, we'd mat down a big place and call it our nest. My sisters and I had a wonderful time doing that.

The boys weren't much interested. I think they were more interested in active things.

Bingham: Then we had a governess later on who helped us put on plays, and she made costumes out of Dennison crepe paper. We were queens and brides and all kinds of exciting things. We'd parade around that beautiful garden for marches. There were even some grass steps from the rose garden up to the pergola that was covered with vines. That's where we'd go up for the altar.

That was part of the place near the tennis court, where they had a little split wood shed for the visitors who came to watch them play tennis. Or, if they had more than four people, somebody would sit there until they could take turns with somebody else. This would be on the weekends when Father would come up from New York.

Glimpses of Childhood

Levenson: You have some more stories to tell me?

Bingham: Yes, about childhood--I was going to call them glimpses.

Walking down the path, for instance, from the Greenwich house to the hedge and the road, there was a grass path with beautiful big peony flowers as a border on each side of it, and they were just my height. I can remember leaning over to smell them because they were so delicious.

In those days I wore a funny little bloomer kind of an outfit, with a wide-brimmed piqué white hat. I still have a picture of myself in that in one of the albums. That was what children wore in those days.

I leaned down and there were pansies all along the grass path, big ones with nice faces, and I used to pick little bunches of those for my mother. The border of pansies was between the peonies and me.

Then there was an old English box hedge that was very tall, at least it seemed so to me. I used to go and sit on a bent branch and look at the birds in the sky and just enjoy being all by myself. I guess that reflected the busy life of a family of small children, but I just loved to get out alone by myself now and then.

We had a big sand box in the back of the house. It was in a shady place, and there were some lilac bushes not too far away. Also some gooseberry bushes, which were quite unusual, because in those days people couldn't plant gooseberries near pine trees. We also had pine trees.

1. The Griswold Family, c. 1917, Evelyn Griswold, holding Dwight. Left to right, Adela (Bartholomew), John, William Jr., Ursula, Evelyn Jr. (Mayer) seated on floor
2. Summer house, Lenox, Massachusetts, built by Grandfather John Sloane



1.



2.

Levenson: What color gooseberries?

Bingham: They were big green ones. I don't remember ever eating them, though. Maybe my parents had them in pies at dinnertime.

Down the hill from the house and the flower gardens, was a farm. I think I spoke about that in my previous talks. But I always remember the big apple tree on the way down to the barn. In the spring it had a perfect carpet of beautiful purple violets underneath it.

We were surprised because at breakfast one day, Father told us that the night before, he had been called up by his neighbor across the street because the house was on fire. Evidently, there'd been a kerosene lamp too close to a ceiling on the back porch, and so the ceiling caught fire and it went on up to the roof of the house. Father and his friend climbed up on the roof and they used Pyrene extinguishers. While one of them lifted the shingles with a hatchet, the other one spread the Pyrene on the flames. And the house was saved.

Levenson: And you slept through all that?

Bingham: Yes, we did. You see, there were no fire engines or gongs or bells, or anything. It had all been done very quietly.

During the First World War, my father joined the Home Guard; it was a part of the National Guard. He rode away every Saturday morning on horseback to meet for their drills and instructions. We were very proud of him in his khaki uniform.

Levenson: Were they armed?

Bingham: No, they weren't armed. But Father did have a rifle that he kept behind a door in the house.

Levenson: Were you afraid at all?

Bingham: No, I wasn't afraid, because it didn't mean that to us. The war was something far away and distant. I think I mentioned before that we used to get the Illustrated London News, so we did see pictures of guns and tanks and such things, and men in trenches.

At some point my grandfather and grandmother from Erie came to visit us. I don't remember whether it was more than once, but we always enjoyed them.

Bingham: One of my brothers was very small at the time, and we had a doll carriage. We used to put him in the doll carriage and run up and down the porch with him, because the porch extended the whole length of the house, which was quite a ways.

You came to the house up a driveway on the side. On the ground floor there was a playroom with a bathroom, and then next to that was the dining room, and then the front hall, entered from the long porch. Then a library, and next a living room with a piano in it. There was a sunroom, they called it, at the end of the house.

I had an accident on the pony one time. Did I mention that?

Levenson: No, no, you didn't.

Bingham: We used to go riding in the morning with our nice old French coachman, who was Claude Delahaye. He had been my grandmother's stable boy, but when Mother and Father were married, he came to help them with the horses because Father and Mother both liked to ride. She rode side saddle.

One day I was riding with Claude, and we always had a lead rein because I was small and they didn't want the pony to take off, of course. We had an airedale dog that always followed us; his name was Peter. He was Father's particular pet. He jumped over a stone wall to chase some chickens at a little farm, and when he came jumping back, he scared the pony and the pony shied. The saddle wasn't tight enough, or else the pony pulled in his breath, and the saddle swung underneath and I with it, onto the ground. Princess, the pony, couldn't stop so I got kicked in my head. It made quite a big wound.

They took me into the little house there and called home to get the car to come and pick me up. I was in bed for some time, I can remember, and there were lovely pictures on the wall. One was an Italian profile of a lady with beads--a little bead cap on her head. I still to this day remember that picture. There were big pine trees outside the window, and I can remember the sound of the wind blowing through the pine trees. It was beautiful.

They used to read aloud to me, which I always enjoyed.

When the doctor came, he had to come at least an hour's distance from Stamford. In those days the roads were not like they are now. He had to sew my head up in the house. I think they did it down in the playroom, in the little bathroom there. But it took quite a while to heal up. It hasn't left a scar, fortunately. I still enjoyed riding after that.

Bingham: Some years later when we were up at Lenox, the little pony was taken up there too, of course. We had a wonderful little pony cart. We used to get Claude to sit in the cart and drive the pony, and two or three children would get on the back and hold on to the cart. It was made of wicker. And we'd run along, of course our feet flying in the air.

I don't think the family ever knew about that. That was when we were out of sight or home.

Levenson: You sound like quite a tomboy!

Bingham: Oh, I think I was! I think I was not an easy child. I had a wonderful time and, of course, with these younger brothers and sisters, I was always told to set a good example, which annoyed me no end. All the way through my teens this happened. But I don't think I set such a good example. (laughter)

We'd go up to Lenox. This nice little pony had a colt. When the little colt was able to walk and trot around, it followed us on our rides. One day after a ride I went running into the house. I looked around and the little colt was in the house! He'd gone up the whole long flight of stone steps, so I had to turn around and run out again so he'd follow me back.

But the sight of seeing a pony in our lovely living room was choice!

Levenson: Did your mother get upset?

Bingham: No, she didn't. Mother wasn't one to get upset. She'd be amused first, which was really a godsend.

We had some good times there too, because they built us a playhouse which was made of logs like a log cabin, down on the edge of the woods. You see, this big house in Lenox was up on a rise, and when there'd be a thunderstorm across the valley, we'd all hide under the wicker chairs that were piled up against the house under a porch, to keep them from getting wet in the rain. We could look out through the wicker at these terrific storms that came to the south part of our valley, over Monument Mountain and Stockbridge; then swirled around usually if they came from that direction. They went around us, not across us. Those which came to us came from the north and Greylock Mountain were really fierce.

Levenson: Were any of you afraid of them?

Bingham: Oh, yes. I was terrified of them because they made such a noise, and they'd hit trees, and they hit barns and the barns would catch fire because of all the hay. Then the animals from down below the

Bingham: hay barn would come charging out, or the farmers and caretakers would try to get them out. The trouble was they couldn't hold them all and they'd go back in and get burned up. It was ghastly to hear the shrieks of these poor beasts. So that was very unhappy, that part. But it taught us about thunderstorms.

Anyway, I must tell you about the log cabin. The house was up on a rise, as I said. Down below to the south were fields of hay and buckwheat and oats. Wheat was grown in other fields nearer the barn. The grain fields were across the big road near the farm. That was to the west edge of the woods where later in the winter we'd skate.

We had this log cabin, and sometimes the Lenox Quartet that Mother used to have come to the house to practice, would be invited for a kind of a brunch. I remember that there were scrambled eggs and bacon. Father once flipped a piece of hot bacon on my thumb.

We'd sit at a big wooden table with benches out under the trees, and David Mannes, who was the head of the music school we attended in New York, would sit around with us children--those of us old enough to eat with them--and we'd have a lovely time.

Mr. Mannes had a wonderful story about a lion. One day a man was starting through a pass and a lion came toward him. There was no room for them to pass. So what to do? The man reached out and put his arm down the lion's throat; caught his tail, and pulled him inside out! (laughter) We loved that story!

The other people in the quartet didn't tell so many stories, but David Mannes had a wonderful way with people. He was a very tall, slender man, with grey hair and big bushy eyebrows, and a very wonderful musician. His wife was a pianist. Their son, Leopold, invented colored photography, I was told.

In the music school I was scared of him, but when we came out in the country, it was fun to be with him. He said to me once when I was studying in the city, "Ursula, you don't play with very much feeling in your music. You have to think about a beautiful bedroom and all the lovely curtains and the bedspreads, and how people try to make things pretty in a house. Try to make your music feel that way, so that it's pretty and enjoyable for other people."

Levenson: Did it help?

Bingham: Oh yes, it helped a great deal. I've thought about it ever since about many other things. Trying to make them attractive for other people. You never know which people are going to influence the children that they talk to.

Levenson: Were there other important influences, since we're on that subject, that you can remember? Or phrases that stuck with you.

Bingham: Yes. I've had one other important influence, the little country school I went to, because you see, we didn't move back to New York until late autumn. It was so nice up in the country. Not until it began to get really cold did we leave, perhaps the end of October. So Mother sent us to a small school; it was a private school in Lenox, and Miss Lippincott was the headmistress. She was a tall, slender lady and quite strict, but her teachers were nice. She was a very pleasant person.

Always in those days--it must have been after the war began--we'd start with "America the Beautiful" or "God Save the King," or some such song or hymn in the morning. We didn't have prayers but we did have singing.

Some of the friends that I made there, I kept for a long time. We didn't see much of each other, because our residences were far away from each other; two miles was a long ways in those days if you went by horse and carriage. Mother and Father were usually the only ones that used the automobile. It was a deep red, French car, Renault I think. When we children went, we had to sit on the jump seats that folded down from behind the driver.

Levenson: So you'd ride facing backwards?

Bingham: Yes. The seats were near the doors and of course they were always afraid we'd hit the handle of the door and go flying out.

Levenson: What do you remember of Miss Lippincott's influence?

Bingham: She was an upstanding person and she believed in our good country. She used to tell us about how wonderful our country was. I think those people are choice and very rare nowadays, and I think our public schools would do well to think about this sort of thing, trying to get children to appreciate what they really have and not be so critical about the way things are run.

We always took a mid-morning lunch with us in a little metal box. I can remember how those apples tasted after they'd been in that metal box on a hot day.

Levenson: Good?

Bingham: Oh, sort of stuffy. We had graham crackers; they would provide milk, and that gave us a little bit of extra energy. Not that we needed it much! [laughter] I feel as though we were pretty lively.

Bingham: Then there was a very nice public library and I'd be allowed to go there sometimes and choose a book of two, and it was great fun. I felt we had quite a rounded life up there, even though we were somewhat isolated.

We'd go over to one of my friends who lived not far from a lake, whose family had a boathouse. Well, that was quite a treat. She was not well, so she had to ride the donkey from home to the lake. She couldn't walk from the house to the boathouse, across a big field in the hot sun. We would go to the boathouse and get our bathing suits on and go swimming from there.

Occasionally, one thing we'd do in the summer was to drive over to New Lebanon. That was just across the border in New York state. There used to be a big Shaker colony there. The large building remained, but I don't think there were many Shakers left. They had a little store, and they made the most wonderful sweet-smelling grass baskets that we used for sewing baskets. They also made big red capes of flannel, and those were very cozy on windy days.

They had lovely furniture, of course That's what they were famous for. The Shaker chairs and their rockers were strong and nice looking.

Speaking of Shakers, there still is a colony there, though I think it's now become an industry; some other people have taken it on. There's a branch of it up in Inverness, California, where the man sells Quaker chairs that you can put together from kits, and strong, handsome pieces of furniture such as desks, tables, and cupboards.

They also have some handsome tables and sideboards and desks, and they also will fix up the seats of chairs. They used a certain kind of very strong tape to make woven seats for the chairs. They've learned how to do that again.

I had a friend who lived at Slingerlands near Albany, New York. She was a Spence School friend, Betty Terry. We liked to visit each other in the summer, but neither of our families wanted to drive the whole way, so there was a church where we'd meet, near Mount Lebanon, New York. Her family would drive her half way and my family would drive me half way, and I'd either go to visit her or she'd come to visit me. That was great fun.

She lived near a little railroad track that only had a milk train once a day, and we'd get up at five o'clock in the morning to put our crossed pins on the tracks (laughter) and watch the train go by. Then after that, later in the morning, we could walk into the village on the tracks, which was a great treat, and safe, because there was so little traffic on that rail line.

Levenson: I'd like to ask you something, Ursula. We both brought up four children, and I still haven't told my children some of the things that I did when I was growing up. It seems to me--at least I was a great deal naughtier than my children. For example, I once altered a railway signal. It was just a little track. I'd like to ask whether it's your impression that we got up to much more mischief than our children have done?

Bingham. I think maybe we did, but it was more of a harmless mischief. Some of it was, for instance, climbing a tree when I was being called to meals saying, "Come and get me." The youngsters nowadays don't have the trees to climb or the fields to run in, or the lawns to play on.

Speaking of lawns, I must tell you about Jules. Jules was a big, fat Frenchman who sat on this big lawn mower and there was room to stand behind his seat and hang on to the back. So we'd ride around the lawns with him, smelling this wonderful grass being cut. That's a thing a child now doesn't know anything about, because if they have a lawn mower, it's his father or mother pushing it.

Levenson: What was the naughtiest thing you did?

Bingham: Oh, I don't know. I did quite a few naughty things. I'd have to think about that a bit.

Levenson: All right. We can put it in later. I've never asked that question before!

The Family Business: W&J Sloane

Levenson: You haven't talked much about your father or his business. Did you have any interest in it as a child?

Bingham: Father made a point of never talking about business when he came home. However, he took us down to see his office once, which was at Twenty-Sixth Broadway. He worked as a young lawyer after Columbia Law School for Mr. Percy Rockefeller, who always lived in Greenwich.

I got to know one of his daughters and played with her sometimes. But we lived several miles apart, so it was always an event to get us together.

We went to see Father's office. Well, it was up on the maybe twelfth floor, but we'd never been up in anything that high before, and looked down, and I said, "Oh, the people look like ants. Look at those little carriages." They all looked so small to us.

Bingham: Later on, after the First World War, Father went into Mother's family's business, which was W&J Sloane. He hadn't known anything about merchandising, but I think they asked him to help with the legal part of it. My uncle, William, was the man who was president of it at that time, and later on, John (Jack). I think William was the head during the war. He worked so hard for the YMCA and the whole war effort, that he became very ill and died not long after the war ended. So my Uncle John was the one to take over. Then, later on, Father became the president. It was a good organization in its way.

There were quite a few Scottish people, thanks to my grandparents' influence. One of them was a Mr. Cullum, who used to stand near the elevator and when a good customer would come along, my grandfather would be called down and he'd ask Mr. Cullum, "Now, what's his name?" Mr. Cullum always knew all the customers' names.

This is a story my mother told. Grandfather could go up to this person and say, "How do you do, Mr. so-and-so, or Mrs. so-and-so," and make a nice impression. So there were tricks to things in those days, too.

Levenson: Do you think your father was interested in business? Was it something that pleased him to do?

Bingham: Oh, I think he was interested, yes, because of the family. And, after all, it brought in a good income in those days. They imported wonderful furniture from abroad. There was this special man--I don't remember his name now--who was the buyer for the old furniture. Consequently, my family were able to get some nice pieces, and lovely rugs. We had a great big rug in our living room at the time I came out. Just previous to that to change the house, they put two rooms together and made one great big living room which later was where we had dances.

I don't know where they got this rug from--I suppose Iran or Turkey. It was a rose-colored rug; it was absolutely lovely and it went the whole length of the room.

Learning to be a Gracious Person

Levenson: How old were you when you were first allowed to go out without an adult?

Bingham: I don't think I was allowed out alone until I was about seventeen. And then I was warned that if anyone followed me, to be sure to pay no attention and to walk fast, and cross the street, or just pop into a store and pay no attention.

Levenson: Who went with you until you were seventeen?

Bingham: We had a nurse until we were about twelve years old. Then we had a governess. Of course, we had McMillan, the chauffeur, and a second chauffeur who drove us places to music school, dancing school, and later when we went to parties. When we went to parties, we were always met by the chauffeur so that we never went home alone with a date. Our nurse or governess sometimes chaperoned us and sat in a coatroom during dances. The date could see us home, but he had to ride in our car.

Levenson: What did the governess do? Since you were attending school, what were her duties?

Bingham: I really don't know! She looked after our clothes, and I guess helped us keep neat and tidy. Then she would accompany us if we had to go shopping. But I remember mostly going shopping with my mother. I think she must have had a fair amount of leisure time. One of our governesses tinted slides to make more money. The nurses also made things for their church to sell at fairs.

Levenson: Did you have pocket money? Money of your own?

Bingham: Yes, we had twenty-five cents a week, for a long time. Then later on, we had a regular allowance. I don't remember just how that worked out. But they always gave us a modest amount so that we never felt we had more than we could use.

Levenson: Did you feel rich?

Bingham: No, I didn't feel rich. I felt just like all my other friends. We never discussed money. That was another thing we were never supposed to do.

I remember once one of the servants told us we were very rich, and my mother was just furious. She said, "You've got to remember you're rich in comparison to them, but don't think of yourselves as rich. Just realize that money is to be used carefully." They were always very careful too. They planned well and carefully.

Levenson: Were you ever rebellious? Teenage rebellion. Generation gap. You know, all the things we're hearing about nowadays.

Bingham: No, we didn't think anything of the generation gap, because we did a great deal as a family and with our older relatives. Many of them were people who would tell good stories. Especially my Uncle Jack would come with these wonderful Scottish stories. I remember even as an old man, he'd come out with these Scottish stories about

Bingham: our cousin Jessie Boag, who lived in Dunfermline and the fact that when she went out, she'd lock the door with this great big brass key and put it under the doormat.

He said, "Well, you know, that was no secret, because when you drove by on the road, you could see this hump in the doormat."
[laughter]

I wish I could remember his stories, because he told them with a real Scottish accent, which made it all the better.

Levenson: You were eighteen when you came out?

Bingham: Yes.

Levenson: What were your responsibilities, other than having a good time?

Bingham: That's hard to answer because I feel I was very irresponsible. We had all these invitations and, of course, we had to decide which ones we'd accept and which we wouldn't. I didn't like to accept the ones from people that I didn't know. Also, we got invited to these big balls that were benefit things. I always felt we had to send a contribution. Well, my allowance wasn't all that big, and I decided to just send five dollars or ten dollars as I could, because the organizations that they were sponsoring were very good--hospitals or homes, or something or other.

Responsibilities I'm trying to think about. Oh, I think mostly just to learn to be a gracious person. I think a good deal was made of that, having nice manners and knowing how to get along with people. Yet I think I really was rather carefree.

Levenson: It's a wonderful concept, to be a gracious person.

Courses at the YWCA and Columbia University

Levenson: Were you getting any sort of training in what the Victorians called demestic economy?

Bingham: No, not till later. I went to a course at the YWCA just before I was married. If I had taken the whole course, I'd have learned all about the entirety of housekeeping. But I just chose to do some of the food courses, knowing how to buy things. I'm sorry I did not take the whole course, because later it would have been very helpful.

Bingham: Then also, just before I was married, I went down to the YWCA of New York City, on Lexington Avenue near Fifty-second street, downtown. At night. It gave a course in first aid and then in home nursing. I took those because I thought they'd be handy, because I knew Woodbridge and I would be going to China, and possibly not near medical facilities. Knowing nothing about China at that point, I felt I needed to have some medical knowledge, especially if we were going to have children.

Then later that year, I decided to enroll at Columbia and take a course that I wanted to, about Far Eastern history. So I went blithely up to Columbia and asked for the catalog and decided on which course I wished to attend. I had to go to the registrar's office and they asked me questions about my education; what college I had been to. I said I had not been to college at all. I had just "come out," been a debutante, and taken the Bryn Mawr examination for French at Foxcroft. The lady registrar said, "Well, you'll have to get the permission of the professor." So I went upstairs where she directed me and knocked on his office door, and I met Professor Lucius Carrington Goodrich.

He had me sit down, and talked with me. I said I wanted to take his course because I wanted to know about China since I was marrying a man who was going to be specializing in China. He said, "Well, I'll take you in." He'd asked me quite a few questions. So I got his signature and went to the registrar. She looked a little surprised, but I didn't think anything of it at the time.

I came to the first class, and here was I with one graduate student and the rest of the men were all professors who'd come to take his seminar for a brushup to know the latest thing about the recent history of China. This was the second part of Professor Goodrich's course on the history of China.

Mr. Henry Luce's father was among them, and Henry Fenn, who had written a dictionary of the Chinese language. So it was quite a course. Mr. Goodrich was awfully good to me. He gave me papers to write on culture and music, or some subjects that were not going to require the kind of research that I wouldn't be able to accomplish.

Levenson: Did you enjoy it?

Bingham: Oh, I loved it! I had a wonderful time. I sometimes had to go by bus. Occasionally, if Mother wasn't using her car, she'd let me go up by the car.

It was a whole different part of New York. You know, we were very, very localized in our activities. We lived near Seventieth Street, and the dances and all were in the Fifties, and our friends'

Bingham: homes were all around where we were, so that we didn't know the rest of the city at all. Here was this whole wonderful university area and Morningside Heights. Yes, we'd driven by there before, but we didn't really know what it was like to live there or be there.

I enjoyed thoroughly going to the different libraries I had to for the different subjects. Most of the books were in the main library at that time. What's now called the old library, I guess.

I didn't get to know the people in the class at all, because I wasn't up there more than just to go to that one class and then home again. I did write the papers I was asked to.

That was just for a few months one year, though. My last year at home after Woodbridge had asked me to marry him.

I took some music lessons at that time; I was playing the piano. I had a nice teacher who lived over on the West Side of Central Park. That I did have to go to by car because the transportation was very indirect.

Levenson: Were you always driven?

Bingham: Not always, but a good part of the time. I used to walk in New York City a lot when I went shopping or anything in our part of town. Bloomingdale's or down to Altman's, or wherever I had to go, perhaps to a luncheon or tea. Lord and Taylor's was another place we enjoyed shopping at.

Levenson: Were you chaperoned, or could you go out alone?

Bingham: Those years when I was coming out, I went out alone most of the time. In the daytime, of course. But in the evenings, I was chaperoned. The girls nowadays wouldn't know what that is, to be chaperoned.
[laughter]

Levenson: That's right.

Volunteer Work

Levenson: Did you do any volunteer work?

Bingham: I belonged to the Junior League. The Junior League had been organized, I think, to train us to do volunteer work. For several weeks after joining, we had to attend sessions to learn about the duties of volunteers and to visit institutions which used volunteers. This was interesting and has been important in my life.

Bingham: I sang in their Glee Club. We occasionally sang at hospitals, and also sang with the Yale Glee Club about once a year. I think this was an occasion for a party at our house, or the house of someone else with refreshments which might be cocoa, cakes, and cookies. (No liquor as it was Prohibition times.)

I also went one afternoon a week with my cousin, Rachel Hammond, to a house to teach girls from the East Side (where the poorer people lived) how to sew, knit, and crochet. Some of these girls came to Sunday school with me at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church at Seventh Street.

The year after my debut, I led an evening group with the help of an experienced recreation teacher at our church school building to which came girls mostly from that East Side area. I presume their parents were church members.

There was one child who came often with a great big dill pickle. She'd take a few bites and lay it down on the side of the piano, and then a few bites more, and the poor woman who was the director of our group didn't like to scold her about it. She was very upset that the varnish might be damaged.

But it was a good thing for us who lived so nicely on Fifth Avenue, to know these young people. Because they were fine youngsters.

Levenson: What did you do with them?

Bingham: We played games mostly, to learn good sportsmanship and fair play. We didn't have any Bible study, because we had Sunday school on Sundays.

Our church had a very mixed congregation of some foreign-born families, some rich families, and the poor families from the area east of Park Avenue. Our minister, Cousin Henry Coffin, as I mentioned, was a liberal-minded person, and the uncle of "Bill," William Sloane Coffin, who became prominent for his support of black people and his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Managing Money

Levenson: You said you didn't have much of an allowance. Were you getting any training in handling money?

Bingham: Not really. We got training through hearing people talking about finances, a certain amount. We got twenty-five cents a week, most of the time. I don't remember whether it started at ten cents or not. But I can remember trying to portion mine between buying a

Bingham: Tootsie Roll from the little man with a cart in the park when I went to play, or giving more to the church, or whatever I was going to use the rest for. And I tried to put a little bit in the savings bank; we always had a little savings bank. I don't think there was much thought about the finance part until much later. Probably in my coming-out years, I was beginning to learn more about it. We did hear a good deal of talk among Mother and Father and their friends about business.

Mother took me to her bank and showed me how to cash a check, to count the money carefully after the teller handed it to me, and to put it carefully in my purse. She also showed me about having a safe deposit box. As she shopped with me for years, I learned how to do this--choosing quality goods, style, color, and to be attentive to cost relative to budget. Also how to take account of sales and bargains, to compare prices in different stores and so on. Mother was a wise business woman.

Father loved to surprise us by bringing home a sack of very good nuts or special fruit. One very hot summer day he even brought or had sent a lug of red cherries. He would chuckle and smile as he presented these surprises to Mother. She would laugh and ask in an amused way how we could eat so much!

I think there was a Depression along about in there, too, 1924. Later on, I kept an account book, but I'm afraid Woodbridge had to teach me more about finances than my parents had.

Levenson: This was the twenties. It sounds as though you had a rather beautifully ordered and happy life. Did you have any contact with bathtub gin and the swinging twenties. [laughs]

Bingham: Oh, there were hip pocket flasks at some of the parties, yes. There was a certain crowd that was called the fast crowd, and the boys had hip flasks and would offer some to the girls. But I never got mixed up with that.

Then we went to Cambridge; there was a young couple who had an apartment. They showed me their bathtub gin contraption. But we stayed away from that sort of business.

Family Tours to Europe: 1926 and 1928

Bingham: One summer shortly after I graduated from school, my family took us abroad. I had had a course at Foxcroft in history of art which was given by a wonderful Scottish woman, Miss Weyman, so I was quite

Bingham: familiar with where the good statues and paintings were in the beautiful churches we visited and could tell which places we must go to see.

We went over by ship and Father read a two-volume work called The Medici. I don't remember the author, but he had a great deal of information about the families that lived in Florence and Rome of the period about which I'd been studying the history of art. So it was great good fun to go with him and when I'd tell about the pictures, he could tell about the people who had commissioned them or who were portrayed in them.

That first trip, Mother took us, Adela, Evelyn, and me, ahead of Father because he could only take a certain length of time of vacation from work. We went early to Paris and took a car with a driver and went through the battlefields. That was very interesting, though sad to see. But we were glad to know that the beautiful churches and buildings were being renovated after the war. The tragedy and reality of war was impressed on us. I always remember going to Rheims and seeing that cathedral. They had partly renovated it but still some of it was all destroyed.

We stayed at a darling little inn there that looked like a family house. We had dinner out in the garden, and there was a pond with fish in it, and we could order what we wanted. We ordered trout, and they fished the trout right out of the pond. I'd never seen anything like that before.

For dessert they served wild strawberries. I think I must have asked for three dishes of those wild strawberries, little realizing how much it took to pick all that. Though I should have known after picking them at the place in Lenox where there was a big apple tree on the edge of the woods, and I used to sneak down there and get strawberries. But then I was just putting them in my own mouth. I didn't put them in a dish and realize how much I was picking or eating!

Anyway they served them with Devonshire cream and sugar, and ever since then, I've felt that was a wonderful treat. Rheims was a beautiful little city and we had a most interesting time.

Father came and arrived on the boat train from Cherbourg with the Yale championship crew who were to race in Europe. He had been a crewman when at Yale so, of course, had come to know these tall, handsome young men on board ship and introduced them to us at the station, but we did not see them again.

Then after we met Father in Paris, we went down through the valley of the Loire and saw the chateaux there, and went to Brittany. In those days the people in Brittany still wore their costumes. The

Bingham: farm carts had huge wheels and the cart was quite small. The men would sit up there with their blue smocks on and a black felt hat, even in the middle of summer, and around the hat there was a wide silk brim and with a big silver buckle at the back and then the silk ribbon hanging down the back. We got the giggles over that. The ladies wore pretty little caps on their heads that were made of starched lace. Each little village had a different shaped cap. The ones at Concarnot where we went were quite tall; they were shaped like a half loaf of bread opened. Those caps of course were lace and white.

The bodices were beautifully embroidered. It just happened we got to a little place, one of the very small towns, when they were having a festival. So we saw the women in their very best dresses, their most beautifully-embroidered bodices and their white aprons, with lace around the edge, over long, full black skirts. It was a real picture.

I took a picture of one of the ladies and sent it to her, subsequently, and she wrote me a little note thanking me, so that was very pleasant. They were very friendly country people. They were very amused at my father, because he wore what the men in those days wore in the country, which was a tweed jacket and instead of trousers, they wore knickerbockers or what did they call them?

Levenson: Plus fours?

Bingham: Plus fours. They had bands tied just below the knee, around full trouser tops. When my brother, Bill, used to go to school, he'd undo one knee and have this thing hanging down. I can remember Mother scolding him and saying, "Why don't you buckle that up and look decent?" "Oh," he said, "Because nobody does that. All the other boys have it this way." So he had to have it the same way.

But the French people thought that was really funny, and they really would laugh when they'd see Father.

I remember going to Dinard in Normandy and going to some other places along the way. We stayed at a little inn that was quite picturesque and rather English-looking at the mouth of the Loire before going back to Paris. And I wouldn't eat my egg that morning, because it wasn't hard boiled; it was all soft and gooey. And I help up the family a long time over that.

There was a pretty little well in the middle of the garden courtyard where we ate breakfast. Finally, we got back to Paris; and we were there for several days. Mother got some clothes for us, which was quite exciting and quite different than New York. We did go to the Au Printemps and got some dresses to wear for everyday. But she got some really pretty things for me because I was going to be coming out in New York.

Bingham: We went to Lanvin and chose some fabrics and sat there in elegance while these models paraded in, and they brought us some lovely things to look at. It was really a treat and so different from anything I've ever done before.

Then we went to England. We stayed in London a number of days. Then we went on up to Scotland. My grandfather had come from Scotland, so we visited the abbey in Dunfermline. My mother had unveiled a window there when she was a girl.

We went to visit the Nairn family there. They made congoleum, a kitchen floor covering. They had a large house and quite an estate. Their children were all grown up. The first morning we were there, we were taken to look at the properties from flower gardens to farm yards. I believe that was the customary thing to do with guests. You let them see the whole place before you did anything else. We also called on his older brother, Sir Michael Nairn. I don't remember what our other activities were, but we had a very good time with them.

They used to come and have dinner with us in New York when they came there on business. They actually were business associates of my father's and uncle's. Since Father was with W&J Sloane at that time, my mother's family's business, he was interested in knowing these people better.

From there we went back by ship to New York. We went over on the Majestic and back on the Olympic. They were the largest ships in those days. We had great games of ring toss and shuffleboard, great competitions with fellow passengers on the ship.

Levenson: That's fun, isn't it?

Bingham: It was lots of fun. But one evening when we were in London, Mother and Father went to the theatre, and we children stayed at the hotel. When Mother came back from the theatre, the next morning she said she'd lost her beautiful pin.

Subsequently, they reported it to Scotland Yard and Scotland Yard insisted that they couldn't do anything about it until they could have a photograph of the pin. Well, there was a family photograph of all of us children with Mother and here she was wearing the pin. So Mother sent that after we returned to the United States. Eventually, after offering a reward for the pin, the man who had picked it up, returned it to Scotland Yard and we got it back. But he was demanding a terrific reward--I was going to say ransom, but he wanted a tremendous price to turn it over. But I think Mother and Father had a lawyer arrange it with Scotland Yard. Anyway, they got the pin back which was fortunate.

Bingham: About two years later, we went on another trip to Europe. My brother Bill came along as well as Adela, Evelyn, and me, with both parents this time. Again we landed at Cherbourg. We went down to Italy on this trip after Paris, and spent a few days in Rome and then went to Florence, which was really beautiful. I loved Florence. We stayed at the Grand Hotel, and there was a plaza in front of it. It was the days when they were playing "Yes, We Have No Bananas," and "Valencia." So everywhere we heard "Yes, We Have No Bananas." It seemed so odd in Italy to hear that. "Valencia" fitted, but not "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

That was the era when the people were also singing the song of the prune.

Levenson: I don't know that.

Bingham: That's a crazy one. I don't think I remember all the words, but it was something about "We have wrinkles on our face; prunes have wrinkles every place." And it went on jiggity-jog, you know. I think one of my girls still has that record because I kept it for a long time. I'd like to hear it again. It would be fun, wouldn't it?

Levenson: Yes.

Bingham: We went up through France and I think we went to England again that trip. I can't exactly remember. I should look up my diary, if I still have it.

But then we'd go back to Connecticut and sort of let our hair down, and get back in the sailboat and into the tennis and the swimming scene.

The Lenox Quartet and Meeting Woodbridge Bingham

Levenson: You spoke of your mother earlier as an administrator, and I really think I understand what you mean. Did she do things outside the home--charitable duties.

Bingham: Oh yes, she did. Well, I don't know how much charity, but there was so much tuberculosis that she became interested in a sanitarium up in New York State, Loomis Sanitarium. I suppose it was at Loomis, New York. And finally became the chairman of that board. There were men on the board, and I don't remember other women, but they would meet at our house.

Bingham: My mother played the piano and she used to play eight-hands with her teacher and a friend and her teacher.

Levenson: Excuse me. Not on one piano?

Bingham: No, on two pianos. Because our family had two pianos from my grandmother's day. One was a lovely golden maple wood one that my sister inherited. I have this lovely old black one.

The family would have concerts occasionally at the house. One of my coming-out parties was for older people, and Mother invited her friends and she had gotten to know Harold Bauer, so she invited him to play for us and we had a little concert and then a tea party. That was awfully special.

Then I had the dance, of course, for the younger people.

I didn't mention the fact that people sent beautiful bouquets of flowers to you when you were coming out. This was always a very exciting thing. Also you had to write nice notes to thank them. So those were all part of learning to grow up.

My family had some wonderful friends.

To go back to the music world now, after we had been at music school, at the David Mannes Music School, for quite a while, Mother got to know a good many musicians. One of them was the cello teacher, and in the summertime he went up to South Mountain near Pittsfield, where Mrs. Coolidge, who came from Boston, had a very nice quartet, the South Mountain Quartet. Then at the end of the summer, she invited other musicians to come. She had built a large building that looked like a barn but it was really a music hall, and they gave a series of concerts there--a series of concerts for three or four days to which people were only invited. You never just bought tickets; you were invited to go.

Mother for years wished she could go. Finally they invited her. Well, Mr. Stoeber introduced us to the other musicians. One of them was Eddie (Edwin) Ideler, who was a cousin of my husband's family. He played the violin and taught us some violin. We had learned, my sister and I, at the Mannes Music School.

We'd go up to this lovely little hillside place and these men had small cottages with their wives. We got to know them.

Finally Mother and Mr. Stoeber put together a quartet, the Lenox Quartet, that was quite different from the South Mountain Quartet. Mr. Stoeber played in it. They did this in the wintertime.

Bingham: They practiced at our house and we children would be allowed to sit on the landing on the stairs and listen. We couldn't sit down--stairs where the family was.

Through this, one summer, Mrs. (Hiram) Bingham had invited the Idelers--they were her cousins--to spend that summer at one of the houses on their property at Salem, Connecticut. Mr. Ideler, one day said, "I don't see why you don't get hold of that big Griswold family down only fifteen miles away, and get them to play with you." So we put together an orchestra and practiced under Eddie Ideler for quite a while during the summer, and gave a concert in the little town hall at Old Lyme, and charged fifty cents a ticket and gave the money to the Mannes Music School for a scholarship for some student who couldn't pay the tuition to go there.

At the concert time, my (future) husband came back with three of his brothers from a trip. He had been teaching at Yale-in-China for a year in Changsha. This was after he graduated from Yale, in 1924. He and his brother Alfred met in Europe to do some mountain climbing in Switzerland. So Alfred and one of his brothers came to the concert and we had little dinner parties and picnics and tennis games in between times, and that was the way I met Woodbridge.

Levenson: Did he play an instrument?

Bingham: He didn't play anything, no. He had one brother, Mitchell, who played the clarinet, and came out with the most dreadful squeaks you can imagine. [interviewer laughs] But he finally learned to play it quite nicely.

We also encouraged some friends of ours to join us, and a friend of mine was Sally Sands. She played the triangle. We invited an artist in the Old Lyme art colony, Harry Hoffmann, who played the flute very nicely, to be in our group.

Well, came time for the concert, there was one piece where he was supposed to play a little solo part. He was very deaf, and when the solo part was supposed to come, he'd already played it. He hadn't heard it; he hadn't followed the music correctly, so he'd already played it, and there was dead silence. We just held our peace and kept on after that.

But we had lots of good times over those things.

Levenson: So how did Woodbridge court you? Did you talk about courtship in those days?

Bingham: Not much, no. We used to go for walks along the beach and he'd come down to dinner, and we'd play music on the victrola. No radios. We had a radio in New York but none in the country. In fact, we weren't even allowed to go to the movies more than once a week.

Levenson: Why not?

Bingham: Oh, because that was not the kind of diversion--We were supposed to read books or do a little sewing, and learn how to make clothes for oursevels.

Mother would read aloud to us quite often. That made the sewing much pleasanter in the evenings.

Levenson: Sounds delightful.

Bingham: It was quite a way between our houses, fourteen miles, and it was all dirt roads, very bumpy. Now they're all paved. But it took quite a while; it took a good three quarters of an hour to get from their camp up in Salem to our place.

I got to know that Woodbridge was going to specialize in Chinese history. He went to Harvard. He was in Cambridge a year before we were married. And stayed in a dormitory, Perkins Hall, and he'd come down to New York to visit me for the weekend sometimes; not very often because he had to study so much.

I went up once or twice to visit him and stayed with some friends there.

Engagement and Marriage, 1926-1928

Levenson: When did you get engaged?

Bingham. We got engaged when we were in Old Lyme. We went for a walk out to a point where we used to tie up our sailboats, and that was where Woodbridge proposed to me, looking up the Connecticut River. It was very romantic.

Levenson: Had you decided already what you would say?

Bingham: No, I hadn't. I hadn't even thought he would do that. It was quite a surprise. Somehow I was very unforward thinking I guess.

Levenson: And what did you do?

Bingham: I told him that would be very nice; I'd be glad to marry him.

Then I told my family, but not until two months later when Woodbridge invited me to a football game in New Haven, and his parents invited my parents to have lunch.

Bingham. We went into Mr. Bingham's study and I told my family that Woodbridge had asked me to marry him. They were horrified. They thought I was much too young.

Levenson: How old were you?

Bingham. I was eighteen. I did have to wait two years. I think that probably was a good idea, though at the time it seemed cruel.

He went off to China in September, 1927. . It was the next fall because he went to Harvard that fall. He went to Peking to do some study on the spot, to learn the language better and get better acquainted with the culture.

After we were married, in June of 1928, we had an apartment in Cambridge on Craigie Circle, next to the very eminent Professor Channing. Mrs. Channing was a tall, New England lady who remembered Woodbridge's father.

Levenson: Wait a minute. Let's have the wedding.

Bingham: Yes, that was quite a wedding. Let's see--Then I'll have to take you back to New York, because some of my trousseau was made by two dressmakers who had a little shop on the third floor of an office building on Fifth Avenue, Madeleine and Angele. They had made quite a few things for me before that, mostly dresses.

Mother had graduated us from Altman's and Lord and Taylor's to these ladies, who were delightful, and had good seamstresses, and they knew style. We, of course, spoke French most of the time. They made some of my trousseau, and made some lovely sachets for me to put my underwear in, which was quite a treat.

But my wedding dress--they had my measurements at Lanvin in Paris because two of my debut dresses were made by them. We sent for drawings of the kinds of dresses they were showing that year. One of them was a dress that was very short in front and long in the back, so we asked them to make this as a wedding dress. They made it of a beautiful creamy-colored white satin. I was surprised when it came, because I hadn't realized it was going to be quite as short in front. To look at it years later, it looked hysterical.

Then I used my grandmother's beautiful rose point lace shawl as a veil with some tulle that hung from my shoulders. There was a low-cut bodice on the dress and the low-cut part was filled in with lovely rosepoint lace, too. My slip also had some rosepoint lace on it.

Levenson: Sounds beautiful.

About New London

Bingham-Griswold Wedding Simple But Impressive

A note of informality and simplicity marked the wedding yesterday at noon at the Old Lyme church, of Miss Ursula Wolcott Griswold, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Edward Scheneck Griswold of New York and Old Lyme to Woodbridge Bingham, son of United States Senator and Mrs. Hiram Bingham.

Most of the men at the wedding wore white flannel trousers and blue coats and the costumes of the women were in keeping with the general informal atmosphere.

The church was decorated in white and gold with a palm background and pink rambler roses along the stairs to the pulpit. There were clusters of spring flowers arranged in a semi-circle at the front of the church and the lighting fixtures were hung with sprays of water oak.

The color scheme of the wedding party was similar. The bride wore white satin with a white satin veil trimmed with old family lace. The maid of honor, Miss Adela Griswold, sister of the bride, wore lavender georgette, and pink georgette was worn by the eight bridesmaids, Miss Evelyn Griswold, another sister of the bride; Miss Rachel Hammond, Miss Ruth Baker, Miss Virginia Kellogg, Miss Margaret Sloane and Miss Sherman Rogers, all of New York; Miss Medora Stedman of St. Louis, and Miss Sallie Sands of Old Lyme, all were Lehigh hats.

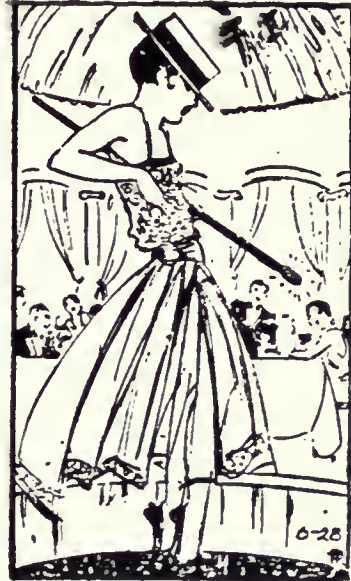
Hiram Bingham, Jr., was his brother's best man, and the ushers included Mr. Bingham's five brothers, Alfred Bingham, Yale '27, Charles Tiffany Bingham, Yale '28, Brewster Bingham, Yale '31, and Mitchell Bingham, and Jonathan Bingham, students at the Groton school; also William E. S. Griswold, Jr., a student at Hotchkiss school, and brother of the bride; J. H. Bartholomew, Yale '24, of Ansonia and Harlow Pearson, Yale '24, of Hartford.

The Misses Nancy and Evelyn Sloane, daughters of Mr. and Mrs. John Sloane of New York and cousins of the bride, were flower girls, dressed in pink georgette and carrying baskets of spring flowers.

The Rev. Henry Sloane Coffin, president of the Union Theological seminary, officiated, assisted by the Rev. W. D. Hoag, rector of the church.

After the wedding there was a breakfast served at the home of the bride, where tables were set out on the broad lawns under the big trees.

Parking With Peggy



"What the younger generation wants is a summer resort where the days are cool and the evenings hot."

There were three bridal centerpieces in the main dining room and the decorations were the same in general as in the church.

The bride, who made her debut two seasons ago attended the Spence school in New York and the Foxcroft school in Virginia. She is a descendant of five governors of Connecticut and is the granddaughter of the late Matthew Griswold and the late John Sloane, and is the great-great-granddaughter of Governor Matthew Griswold.

Mr. Bingham is a descendant of three Colonial governors. He attended the Groton school and was graduated from Yale university in 1924. Following his graduation he spent much time in foreign countries and studied the Chinese language and literature at Yen-Ching school, Peking, China.

Parked among the guests' automobiles at the wedding were many bearing license plates of Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and the District of Columbia and a special car was chartered on the railroad to bring guests from New York. State police took charge of the automobile traffic before and after the wedding.

John Coolidge, son of the president, accompanied the family of Governor Trumbull. The governor's staff was resplendent in white uniforms.

as Ursula
Will you accept this
little wedding gift - late as
Mrs. Carnegie
it is? It goes with my love
and best wishes for you always
Affectionately Louis Carnegie
Two East Ninety-first Street

Bingham: I felt very elegant. But for a country wedding, it seemed almost too elegant.

We had the wedding at the First Congregational Church in Old Lyme, Connecticut, which was my Griswold ancestors' church there. I was driven up by our good chauffeur we'd had for many years, MacMillan. Mr. Bingham had by then become governor (of the state of Connecticut) I think, and he insisted on our having an escort. So here came two policemen on motorcycles, and nobody in the countryside had heard of any such thing as this parade before.

Father and I got to the church too early, so I had to sit in the car for a few minutes before I could go in. The wedding was set for eleven o'clock in the morning. We had guests from New York in the train, and Mother arranged to have them met at Saybrook Station by friends of ours.

The church was quite full. My cousin, Henry Coffin, officiated with the local minister, Mr. Hoag, Dick Hoag. Then we had a luncheon down at the house; it was buffet lunch. The bridal party was seated at a table in what was called our playhouse. No wine, and that was a surprise too, because even in Prohibition times, for a wedding often somebody found some wine somewhere.

Levenson: You say the weather turned beautiful for you.

Bingham: Yes, it was lovely and sunny. Very hot of course, and sticky, in June. But it was a lovely day. I think I had eight bridesmaids. My two sisters and a cousin, and some friends of mine from the early days and a few from Foxcroft days. Most of them I still keep in touch with.

Levenson: That's lovely.

Bingham: I don't see them very often.

We finished our lunch, we were supposed to go off in the car. Well, they put all kinds of things on the car in the garage, but our little car that my father-in-law had given us was the first of the new-type Fords. Instead of the old Model-T, it was a Model-A, I guess they called them. And it was a convertible. It was hidden on a back road, some distance from the house.

Our chauffeur, McMillan, was the one who took us there. I guess he must have been helping to hide it away.

We finally got off and we got up to East Haddam where we were going to cross a bridge across the Connecticut, and discovered we had to get some gasoline. So we stopped at a gas station to get some gasoline and it wasn't quite enough. We drove over to a nice

Bingham: little New England inn near Danbury, for our first night. It looked like a private house; it was a sweet place. We had supper outside on the terrace. I was very embarrassed, because Woodbridge told them we were bride and groom, and I was trying to keep that a secret and look very much as though we'd been married a long time.

The next day we went over to the home of the parents of one of the bridesmaids, in Bedford, New York. They had a lovely pink house near a pond. It was an old mill pond, and the old mill building was still there. We stayed in this place for about four or five days and then we started on our trip.

We went up to Quebec for our wedding trip. On the way we stopped, I guess it was at Lake Champlain, at the little hotel. A colored man came to take our bags out of the car, out of the rumble seat in back, and a few grains of rice dropped out. He looked at us. We were really embarrassed! That's part of being a bride, I guess.

We went to stay at the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec for a night or so. Then we took a steamer and went up the Saguenay River. It was so beautiful sailing down the St. Lawrence. Forests of pine trees lined the banks of the river. Even way out on the river, you could smell the pine trees. Up at Saguenay, the little village which was tucked away up the smaller river, there were some people on their way to church. They were all dressed in black. I had forgotten that in Europe so much black was worn, even in the country.

But they were riding to church with their husbands, driving them in small carriages. It was very quaint. The priest wore a perfectly beautiful lace surplice over his colored silk gown. I don't know the correct names for these peices of clothing.

Levenson: I'm not sure.

Bingham: Then we sailed back to Quebec and started back to Connecticut a different way through Hanover, New Hampshire to the house that had been given to Woodbridge by his grandmother when he was twenty-one, and which his father had managed for him. The Idelers, who'd introduced us, had stayed at Woodbridge House, named for Wood's ancestors.

Mother had taken all our wedding presents and she wanted to have the house perfect. They were planning to go up the day after we arrived; they didn't know we were coming that soon; and clean it and get everything in order.

But we arrived in the most topsy turvy mess of things in that house. But that didn't matter. So we had the fun of helping them to tidy it up in the next few days.

Bingham: Later we went up to Cambridge--Wood went ahead to get an apartment. One time while he was away, I invited my brother-in-law to come and stay with me because I didn't like being alone in this house. We sat up talking late. He was an artist and an avid reader, and he'd lived in Paris some.

Levenson: Was this one of Woodbridge's brothers?

Bingham: Yes, one of Woodbridge's brothers, Mitchell. The night before he came, I'd had an awful dream about the house burning down. I went up to bed and I lay down and looked up at the ceiling, and here was this bright light. I thought where is that light coming from? I'd turned them all off downstairs.

In the kitchen, we had a kerosene heater for the water, and the kerosene had somehow gotten on fire, and flames were licking up around the heater. I thought the whole house was going to go. I rushed downstairs and took the jar of kerosene and threw it out the door of the kitchen and grabbed up some earth from a little garden bed near the kitchen door and threw it on the place where the kerosene jug had been, and managed to put the fire out.

Levenson: That was quick thinking.

Bingham: Meanwhile I yelled "Fire!" to the people upstairs, so they came down to help. Yes, it did put it out, thank heavens. It was very scary.

That, I think, actually was a year later than after we were married. Because Mitchell came to dinner and I didn't know how to cook very well. I put the beans and the chicken and the potatoes on all at the same time. So we had half-raw chicken, and half-raw beans and potatoes. I didn't cook them well.

Levenson: Is that about it for for today, do you think?

Bingham: I guess so.

Senator and Mrs. Hiram Bingham

Bingham: My mother-in-law and father-in-law lived at The Camp, about ten or twelve miles inland in Salem, Connecticut. One little piece of that building, the dining part, had been brought over from Japan by her parents. They had gone over to Japan in the late nineteenth century and just loved the country, and had this part of the house sent over. Later, a living room and bedrooms and baths were added, all in the same style.

Levenson: Were they missionaries?

Bingham: No, they were just people who had money. My husband's grandfather had said he'd work until he could make enough money to live on without having to work. When he achieved what he thought was enough, he just traveled with his wife. They went to Europe occasionally, but they took this wonderful trip to Japan. They'd also been to Hawaii a number of times, which is where my mother-in-law and father-in-law met.

Levenson: What were your first impressions of Senator Bingham?

Bingham: As a very tall, stately man, but he talked a great deal about himself and his achievements. I first saw him when there was a dedication of a very old house that had been renovated down near Old Lyme and near Brides Brook. The occasion was to commemorate a marriage of the first couple who lived in this old house. The story goes that the bride lived on one side of the brook, and the groom lived on the other. They didn't cross but they were married, each on opposite sides of the brook. They must have crossed afterwards, of course. But I wonder if the minister stood in the middle of the stream, or what he did. [laughter]

Some of those old country stories were great fun to hear the old people tell. We don't sit around and do that much nowadays, and I think it's a great pity, because even nowadays we have stories. They're not old, of course, but some day they might be fun for our children and grandchildren to know.

Anyway, he was the speaker there. He was a very impressive looking man because he was so tall and he had very white hair. And he was important. He had been elected the governor of the state, and some of my parents' friends had worked hard to have him elected.

Then the senator from the state died and they asked my father-in-law to be a senator. Well, he first had to resign the governorship and then become the senator. He was appointed, I guess. But there was a great deal of bad feeling about it among people because of the ones who'd worked hard to make him governor. They didn't see why he should assume the senatorship when he was already governor. But it was more of a challenge and he was more needed really in that post. So he went to Washington.

My mother-in-law was a very little lady who played the violin beautifully. Very modest and very quiet, and not terribly efficient. But she ran quite a household, because when you think of seven boys and their bringing friends in and out, and all their activities, it took quite a bit of patience to plan for and carry things on all the time.

Bingham: She had Irish maids. I always remember one, Catherine, who was both chamber maid and waitress. She worked very hard. I don't think she got due credit, but my mother-in-law was a very sweet person. In her later years, two of her sons became very ardent Moral Rearmament people, and she also thought this was a great idea, following Frank Bookman. But I was not in sympathy with his ideas.

She was always trying to persuade me to be more interested in it. But I had become very interested in the university YWCA and my church--

Levenson: (interrupts) Excuse me, Ursula. Could you just remind me what the Moral Rearmament movement was about.

Bingham: I would have to do some thinking about that to do it more clearly, but they were very simplistic and--I don't know how to say it--They didn't believe in anybody drinking or living extravagantly. They had three things that they were very strong about.

Anyway, I finally decided to talk very definitely to my mother-in-law and said, "Look here, I don't want to hear any more about this because I'm not interested. I don't bother you about my interests and I please would like not to have to talk about this." Then I went home and that night, I spent a good part of the time crying, because I felt badly to have scolded at her.

The next day I went up to Hartford and on the way back from doing errands in Hartford, there was a fruit stand by the side of the road. I knew she liked strawberries, so I bought her two big baskets of strawberries. Took them over to make amends.

Levenson: About how old were you?

Bingham: That was after I was married. I must have been about twenty-three. But I felt badly.

Levenson: How was the senator with his children? Was he a stern disciplinarian?

Bingham: He was quite stern with them. He expected a great deal of them. He wanted high scholarship and one or two of them were not born scholars, so this made it very difficult for those two. But Woodbridge was always very interested in reading and scholarly things. So he got along very well with his father on the whole.

They used to have athletic meets. The senator instituted a great feeling of competition between his sons, which had its advantages, but I felt was very destructive in some ways, because it made them feel antagonistic at some points, as youngsters can be. But they were all very different in their interests and their abilities. They were a wonderful lot of young men, tall and handsome.

Bingham: They often had their pictures taken in a row with the father at one end and the mother at the other and the young men in between, graded according to height. The pictures appeared in the newspaper, or publications for Washington sometimes.

They made a great deal of me when I was married because I was the first girl in the family. They had a girl cousin who lived in England. Mrs. Bingham's sister was married to Sir James Jeans, a famous mathematician and astronomer. We met him once in New York. They came to tea with my family when they came over to the United States, which was very seldom.

In the Yale library, I had a wonderful time reading the letters between Lady Jeans and her mother, Mrs. Mitchell, because they were at first not very close. Oh, I can't go into all that.

Levenson: Not happy in England?

Bingham: Oh no, they were very happy in England. This sister of Mrs. Bingham's had been to Bryn Mawr and then she'd met Sir James Jeans, and he courted her while she was still a student there. There were some nice letters between them in this Yale library collections.

The Bingham's were divorced in 1927. He married Suzanne Hill soon afterwards.

About a year later, my mother-in-law married Henry Gregor, a pianist who used to accompany her.

Mrs. Gregor was very good to her boys. She was always there to listen to what they had to say. There was a lot of music in the family. Alfred was very musical; he played the piano. He was the third son--played the piano very well. I got to know him extremely well the year that I came out. Woodbridge was in China and so I would invite Alfred to come to parties with me. He was still a Yale law student at the time.

He published a magazine called Common Sense for some years, which Mrs. Gregor helped support because she was interested in his forward-looking ideas, as she called them.

Levenson: Were all of you Democrats?

Bingham: No. I've been a Republican--my family were all Republicans and Mr. Bingham was a Republican. Some of the young men became Democrats in the time of Roosevelt.

Levenson: Did this create conflict?

1. Ursula Wolcott Griswold in her rose wool coat, beaver collar, rose velvet hat with lace and fur trim, in Central Park, c. 1913
2. Tennis at Black Hall, 1926
3. Passport photo, 1919
4. Ursula (left), sister Adela, at Dunfermline, Scotland, 1926
5. Woodbridge and Ursula Bingham's wedding, Black Hall, June 28, 1928



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.

Bingham: Not really. They had very lively discussions at table, and sometimes the men were asked to make speeches, to give them good practice, because the senator felt they should know how to do this.

Brewster was I think the fifth in line, and he was a minister. He went to Union Theological Seminary after college and became a Congregational minister and married Frances, who'd'v been brought up in Foochow, China.

Some years later when we were living in China, they came and stayed with us one winter in Peking and we had a very delightful time with them. Brewster was one of the Moral Rearmament sons. Mitchell was the other one.

The boys all went to Groton School in Massachusetts, when Dr. Peabody was headmaster. All of them, except Mitchell, are Yale graduates. Mitch studied painting in Paris instead.

II MARRIED LIFE: GRADUATE SCHOOL, HARVARD AND THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY, AND STUDIES IN THE ORIENT, 1928-1937

Cambridge Living

Levenson: Here you were a very young bride [twenty years old]. What were your expectations of married life and your own plans?

Bingham: Oh, we had thought we would live in the East and Woodbridge would be able to teach Chinese history either at Harvard or Yale, or a college in New England somewhere. We lived in Cambridge the first two winters we were married and both winters Woodbridge became quite ill. The second time I was very tired, because it had been quite a strain. So my mother decided to take me abroad, and she arranged for my two sisters, Adela and Evelyn, and a cousin, Margaret Sloane, and I to go abroad with her to hear music in Germany.

She was very anxious that we not feel any animosity toward the Germans, because she knew they were fine people and just because there'd been a war, she didn't see why the bad feeling should continue.

So she wrote to a friend of hers who'd been a school friend in New York, who had married a German, Count Grote. They lived in northern Germany. She asked if we might visit them perhaps. They made a nice thing of it. They had a house party with some very fine German young men and women.

After our trip to Munich and Bayreuth and hearing Arturo Toscanini at the wonderful opera in Bayreuth we went up to visit Count and Countess Grote on this big farm, Wachtentin, they owned in the wheat country of Mecklenburg, east from Hamburg. For financial reasons they lived in Switzerland and their son and his Boston-born wife lived on and managed the estate.

Levenson: What year was this?

Bingham: It was 1930, summer.

Levenson: Did you enjoy being a graduate student wife?

Bingham: No, I didn't really. It was very hard to make friends. I came from New York and people from New York were not welcomed by Boston and Cambridge people. Especially because Woodbridge was a Yale graduate and I had not attended college. We were not thought to be intellectual. Also we lived in a nice apartment, not student housing and people wondered about that.

My mother had had a friend who had an extra apartment to rent on Craigie Circle. She was an old maid who was terribly fussy. I like fresh air and open windows, and she would come in the minute we went out and close all the windows! On the other hand, she was very kind and let us use all her nice furniture, because we didn't have much then.

Across the hall was a Mrs. Edward Channing whose husband was a very well-known professor of American history. She was a tall, typically New England old lady, and she always was friendly to me and suggested that I join a group of wives that were student wives; I did that and met some nice ladies, mostly young faculty wives, that way. Not all of them were particularly congenial, but at least it gave me an introduction to the university world, because I had not had that. I hadn't been to college except for one course which I took at Columbia, which I think I've told about.

Levenson: Right.

Bingham: Also I had belonged to the Junior League in New York, so I transferred to the Boston Junior League and joined their chorus there. But I couldn't get to Boston very often. Although I met some nice people that way, I couldn't see much of them because it was hard to get back and forth to Boston, for me at least.

Levenson: The subway was built, wasn't it?

Bingham: Yes, but when I was at Craigie Circle I was pregnant and I was feeling very ill a lot of the time. Then the next year when I was on Memorial Drive, we had a beautiful apartment there--high up. Then I had little Anne to look after and although I had some help, I couldn't just pick up and go easily, and it didn't seem to fit in very well.

Levenson: Did you find that perhaps having a little more money and not living in student housing divided you from the group of student wives?

Bingham: Yes it did, really, I think. But the student housing wouldn't have been feasible for us because Woodbridge would have to have his turn at stoking the furnace or doing the chores, and he wasn't physically capable of that at the time.

Attends Lecture Courses from Paul Pelliot, Langdon Warner and Sir Aurel Stein

Levenson: Did you take a part in the intellectual life of Cambridge?

Bingham: Yes, I did. I went to be an auditor at Professor Paul Pelliot's art lectures one year at the Fogg Museum.

Levenson: How were they? He had such a terrible reputation for being unkind, particularly in his reviews of books by other scholars.

Bingham: Oh, it was wonderful. He was very interesting, extremely interesting. I'd been very interested in European art in my last year at school, at Foxcroft, so it was great to learn about Far Eastern art, and I was very excited about it and very thrilled to have been allowed to audit his class. The other students were nice to me, even though I wasn't a registered student, and I enjoyed using the Fogg Museum Library.

Then the second year there were some other students I got to know a little better in Mr. Langdon Warner's class. I told him that I wouldn't take it unless I could take the examination, because I felt I would work a little harder and learn better that way. He said that was all right. So I did take the examination; I think I got a C in it, but no matter! I had the good fortune to meet Katherine Ehr Gott at that time.

That was how it happened. I went to the library, and I used to read and read and read. One time I noticed that the lady across from me had an unusual ring on her wedding finger--it looked like two silver snakes face to face. I asked her about it and she said, yes, that was her wedding ring. I found out that she and her husband, James Caldwell, lived right around the corner from us in a one-room apartment. Her husband was a graduate student in the English department. Katherine Caldwell later taught Oriental Art at Mills College, Oakland, and her husband taught English at the University of California, Berkeley.

We took Kay to some lectures of Sir Aurel Stein's in Boston, and got to know her quite well. At the end of the year, we said goodbye and thought we wouldn't see each other again because I didn't know then that I was going to California.

Well, the first little dinner party we went to in California, at Ted and Ruth Benner's, who were there but Katherine and Jim Caldwell! So from then on we've known each other well.

Levenson: Tell me about Aurel Stein.

Bingham: Oh, he was a fascinating person. He was a short, stocky, Hungarian-born scholar and explorer who discovered wonderful treasures on a trip to Tun Huang which made him famous. He became a British citizen, and many treasures were given to the British Museum. I met him once socially, and I said, "How did you learn Chinese?" "Oh," he said, "I just took a Chinese dictionary and I rode the camel and used to study Chinese going across deserts." I thought that was quite a picture! But he spoke well and showed slides of his trip. Professor Paul Pelliot was also a very interesting scholar.

I had the nerve to invite Professor Pelliot and Professor von Stael-Holstein, also at Harvard that year, to lunch. Our first year in Cambridge, I had a black maid who helped me with cooking and housekeeping. This was the year we were at Craigie Circle. I planned to have Irish stew of all things for gentlemen like that, because I knew that the maid knew how to make it. They hadn't had that before, I guess.

Levenson: Was the lunch a success?

Bingham: Well, I don't know if it was a success. It was from our point of view, but I don't know how they felt about it. [laughter] But young brides don't have sometimes--at least I didn't have much idea of just what to do and how to do it. Just did the best I could. I hadn't taken a proper housekeeping course. I hadn't paid attention at home to what we'd had or how to cook a whole meal. I know that Woodbridge and I liked the stew Martha Washington could prepare.

The Fogg Museum was a wonderful place to have these lectures that I went to. All the beautiful things they had on exhibit! And it was fun to have to go to the [Harvard] Yard and see all the students bustling around, and then sometimes go up to the big Widener Library, and get books there, because Woodbridge's being a registered student, they would allow me to borrow books.

Pays Formal Calls on the President of Harvard, and Later, at the University of California on Mrs. Robert Gordon Sproul

Bingham: One of the things my father-in-law had told me was always to call on the head of the university's wife and on the wives of some of the prominent professors, or at least the ones with whom my husband was studying. So I went all dressed up one day to call on President and Mrs. [Charles Norton] Eliot. Had a very nice visit. I don't remember her particularly, and I don't know what we talked about, but I remember him as an outstanding-looking, fine man, and that I

Bingham: tried very hard to make interesting conversation and tell about Woodbridge and his interests and aims.

Levenson: Were they surprised? I mean, was this the usual thing to do?

Bingham: I'm sure it wasn't the normal thing to do. But they didn't seem to be surprised. I guess they'd lived through the generation when there had been calling done more regularly. But when I came to California, then I went to call on Mrs. Sproul [wife of Robert Gordon Sproul, President of the University of California, Berkeley] one day wearing my white gloves and little neat navy blue hat with a veil, and a pretty navy flowered dress, and she was surprised. I had telephoned first to ask when I might call on her.

I knew she stayed at home sometimes on Tuesdays and so I went to see her. She used to tell me about this years later; she'd even tell her friends in my presence, that this was the way we'd met. So I think calling out in California wasn't as usual. Though my father-in-law had been here as a student in Latin American history, and he had called on people on Sundays. In fact he had a little dog, and he used to call regularly on certain people, and then on others whom he'd met.

They used to say that if ever he was sick and couldn't go, the little dog would know just where to go.

Levenson: Did he ever mention Jack [John S.] Service's parents? I think they were students at the University of California when he was there.

Bingham: No, he didn't mention his parents. He knew of Jack Service, of course, because years alter my father-in-law was asked to be on the Loyalty Review Board, and those were terrible times which were referred to as the McCarthy era. Jack Service had had to appear before this board. Now, here we are in Berkeley with the Services, and we're good friends.

I once saw Caroline and I said, "I'd like to talk to you about something." I told her that I felt very badly that we didn't know each other. Her husband was in the same general field as mine, in Chinese history, and interested in China, and I felt it would be awfully nice if we could get to know each other without all these unhappy, bygone incidents.

So they were nice enough to ask us to go for dinner at Trader Vic's one evening, and we had cocktails at their house first. That put us on a wonderful basis, and we've been good friends since then. In fact, in my forthcoming tales, I will talk lots more about them and the trip I took to China in 1981 with them.

The Depression

- Levenson: One thing I would like to talk about before we move to California is the Depression and what the impact was on you, and your friends, and families.
- Bingham: Thanks to our having been invited that first year in Cambridge to join a small group of young people to a series of subscription dinner dances which were very fashionable and popular in those days, we met some young business people from Boston. I remember one dance we went to I was dancing with a young businessman, and he said, "You're never going to forget today." I said, "Why?" "Oh," he said, "didn't you hear? The stock market crashed." I hadn't read the paper that morning. This was [October 29] 1929.

It was one of the first dances we'd been to and, sure enough, we certainly didn't forget that day. It was lucky we had such wonderful parents, because we never could have gone through all the graduate years and been able to live as nicely as we did, if they hadn't been such supportive people.

- Levenson: Did they make you a regular allowance?
- Bingham: Yes, they did. Wood's grandmother gave us a regular allowance, and my parents did also. They were very good about helping out.
- Levenson: Did you have friends who had to drop out of college because of the Depression?
- Bingham: Well no, I didn't have friends, but there were a lot of people who did have to. My family didn't send us girls to college, so my sisters never went, but my brothers all went to Yale. I don't think I can say I had any particular friends who had to drop out. But I know they all were very hard up and had a hard time getting through. Those were terrible times.

Anne, Our First Baby

- Levenson: You scooted over the birth of your first child. Was this planned?
- Bingham: Yes, we had intended to have a child. But I was completely ignorant about bearing a child. My mother had never told me much about having children, so I had a hard time learning about and mentally adjusting to the whole thing. But my mother and my husband's grandmother and her daughter, my mother-in-law, all were very understanding and

Bingham: sympathetic and helpful. Actually after Wood had been sick that second time, we went down and spent some time, a month at least, with his grandmother, Granny Mitchell, in Florida. We stayed in the house that she had built on Biscayne Bay. The place was called Sweet Way. It was really quite a treat to have papaya trees outside your window, and a flock of parrots coming each morning early to try to eat some of the fruit. What a racket they made!

And the smell of the ocean right there was good. It was a fascinating house. Built in two parts with a covered balcony from one to the other. One part had a bedroom downstairs and upstairs was my grandmother-in-law's room with its lovely view of the bay. And the living room with a piano so my mother-in-law could play. She loved to read and be read to. Lots of books always around.

The cross walk connected the main house with the place where the kitchen and dining room were and also the maids' rooms, I think. There was a little gardener's cottage up towards Bricknell Avenue. And coconut trees along the shore as well as the driveway from Bricknell Avenue to the house with these big coconuts that would fall down. How delicious were the ripe ones! [clock chimes in background] It was a whole new atmosphere.

We stayed in a little triangular cottage that had two bedrooms and a bath somewhat at right angles connecting at an angle so the triangular porch looked out toward the bay and got the breeze and we could sit there and do our reading happily, which we did a great deal of the time. We took walks before dinner. One day we called on Mr. Louis Tiffany, Wood's uncle.

After we got back from Florida, I went to stay with my parents in New York because it was very soon that my baby was due. Mother saw to it that I had a good doctor there, Dr. Richard Pierson. Our Anne was born June 9, 1929 at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center's Sloane Hospital very near Riverside Drive. It was on Fort Washington Avenue and Broadway--a combination of several hospitals which had joined together so that their facilities would be inter-usable. Sloane Hospital, Presbyterian Hospital, the Babies Hospital of New York, and an eye hospital, I think.

One of those Sundays, years before, when Mother was taking the little children off for a drive, Father had taken me up to see the place where these buildings later became so famous, and it was just a big open field with a board fence around it overlooking the Hudson River and the New Jersey palisades. Father said, "One day, there are going to be some wonderful hospitals here."

Bingham: Well, it turned out he was on the Board of Directors of the group which was making plans for this large Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center at 168th. Street, between Broadway and Hudson River Drive. Eventually, on an adjacent block the Neurological Institute erected a building. Buildings to house nurses and accommodate medical students were erected as well. Mr. Edward Harkness donated a building for private patients who could be given care in any one of the connected hospitals.

Father and some of the board members worked hard to raise the money for this large, innovative project. Years later, Columbia University awarded an honorary degree to Father in recognition of his efforts. I have a photograph taken at this time. [see following page]

Levenson: Wonderful!

Graduate Student Days at the University of California, Berkeley
1930-1934

Bingham: Woodbridge had bad bronchitis the second year he was at Harvard and the third year he was ill with pleurisy. So the doctor finally told him he should find a better climate. He wrote to Professor Treat at Stanford University while I was in Europe, and asked about the Far Eastern courses. Found there was nothing on China, which is what he wanted. So he decided to come to the University of California as Professor Treat recommended.

When I got back from Europe he said, "Well, we're moving to California." I was pretty surprised. My poor mother was distressed, because we were very close and I think it really hurt her feelings to think that we were going to do this without having consulted with the family.

Levenson: How did you feel about it?

Bingham: I don't remember having any particular reaction because my father used to come here on business to see the San Francisco W&J Sloane store and it seemed quite usual for him to do that. He'd bring us back beautiful things from here, like a Japanese pink silk kimono for me which I gave recently to one of our daughters. It had storks flying on it--a wedding symbol in Japan--beautifully embroidered in white. I had also passed by San Francisco on a trip to Japan in 1927 so I imagined it would really be quite a nice place to go. I looked forward to it, and I've never regretted it, really. Sometimes I feel very far away, but most of the time I'm happy that we've

Bingham: had our life here where people have been so kind and friendly and where life has been so interesting and rewarding.

So here it was Depression time, and we were moving to California. Woodbridge had been granted his M.A. degree when he left Harvard.

We went by train, of course, and it was early fall. We arrived on Columbus Day, October 12, 1930, a holiday. We landed from the train in Berkeley. A friend of my husband's family met us, Colonel Robert Moulthrop. With him was Mr. Frederick Duhring. Fred Duhring and his wife Ruth were the ones who helped us meet many people in Berkeley. They were very friendly and helpful, and introduced us to John Orlney, the Ford dealer, who sold us a Ford convertible similar to the one we had had in the East. That was very exciting because my father-in-law had given us a little Ford car when we were married. We'd had to sell that when we left the East, and we felt quite sentimental about this. We'd taken our wedding trip in it.

The Duhrings took us to the Claremont Hotel. In those days, the Claremont Hotel was a much simpler place than it is now. They had coco matting on the floors, and in the rooms there were just iron beds and very plain furniture. But we had a beautiful view of the bay.

Levenson: Really!

Bingham: Yes. But the hotel had a beautiful garden, which was wonderful for our little Anne to play in. From there, we finally rented a house at 1921 Capistrano Avenue. The landlady, because of the Depression, had to rent this house. We enjoyed that place. It had a bridge over a small gulch to the garage from the street, and a garden with a small lawn and several small garden beds, plus a stone-paved terrace area.

It had a living room, dining room, one bedroom, and kitchen on the first floor. In the living room, there was a fireplace with a double chimney, because over the fireplace, instead of a pretty painting, there was a window that looked out on San Francisco Bay over the oak trees. Everybody used to comment on that because it was so unusual. The chimney worked well!

Two bedrooms were upstairs. We used one for Anne and we had the other one with a nice dressing room and bath and a narrow sun porch. The downstairs bedroom was used when Claire arrived.

A Scottish nurse, Ella Fairweather, came out with us. She was a young girl, the niece of one of the employees at W&J Sloane in New York, who had come over from Scotland. I think it was her uncle wanted to find a nice place for her. So Mother said, "Oh, my daughter is

Bingham: going to California. Would you think that your niece could go with her and help look after her child?" She was a darling girl. Later she married and lived in Sausalito. I've lost track of her, unfortunately.

Woodbridge enrolled at the university here in Berkeley, and there was lots of time on my hands so we'd sit on the porch, a glassed-in porch just outside our bedroom and I'd read or write letters to our families and tell them about our experiences while Wood studied.

We had the fun of making friends together and learning about this new climate and these new customs of doing things. It wasn't too different but the people called their automobiles "cars" instead of automobiles. Then we'd go to San Francisco by the ferry boat either from a long pier that went into the bay which landed at Fisherman's Wharf or from down in Oakland, which was always more crowded and took you straight to the downtown part of San Francisco. Those rides were quite fun with beautiful views, though in bad weather, they were rather hazardous.

Levenson: How were Woodbridge's studies going?

Bingham: Oh, they were going fairly well.

Levenson: What was the faculty like?

Bingham: Professor [William Alfred] Morris was one of the men he studied with, and his wife was a dear little lady. Professor Eugene McCormac's wife was very cordial to us, used to invite us for dinner parties. They were quite formal affairs. She always had interesting people for us to meet. Their daughter, Virginia, was a bit younger than we were and later we got to know her quite well after she and her mother retired to Carmel following Professor McCormac's death.

Then Professor Paxson, Frederic Paxson and his wife Helen, were also very good friends and thoughtful of us for years. The Paxsons had a brunch one time at the house they built at 40 Highgate Road. I'd never known what a brunch was before. Mrs. Paxson had cooked it herself. She had waitresses to serve. She even invited some of the Regents. I thought that was very brave, because they seemed awesome people to me in those days!

She had made Philadelphia scrapple, and many good dishes to choose from, served on their dining table, buffet style. She was a Philadelphian. Professor Paxson had come from the University of Wisconsin. One of her daughters, Jane, was a medical doctor, and they had two younger girls, Emma and Patricia.

Levenson: Was Woodbridge still studying Chinese at this point? Chinese language?

Bingham: Yes, he was studying Chinese language, but he was also studying Japanese history as well as Chinese history. And American history. He had to qualify for all these courses in order to get his Ph.D. He did get his M.A. in Harvard.

Levenson: How was the language program here?

Bingham: Oh, I think it was good. Professor Boodberg was one of his teachers, Peter Boodberg. We got to know him very well, and his wife Elena and his daughter. The daughter, Xenia, was a pianist.

Then there was Professor [Yoshi Saburo] Kuno, who was on his committee when he came up for his Ph.D. He was a Japanese and he had been not very friendly.

But, we thought, having called on Mrs. Paxson, and Mrs. James Westfall Thompson, whom we came to know very well, we thought we should also know the Kunos. Professor Thompson had come to Berkeley from the University of Chicago as professor of medieval history. So we decided to go and call on the Kunos. We got all dressed up to go. We found an address for them on Arch Street, but the street ended. We discovered that it continued beyond an intervening block. We had to find our way to where the address indicated they'd be.

There was a field with big pine trees and one little tiny bit of a cottage at the far side of it. Woodbridge went over and knocked on the door, and nobody answered. We really didn't see them. Later we found out that they didn't live there. This was just where he worked.

He married an American woman and they kept to themselves. Anyway, he wasn't in the group at the university that we saw anything of.

Professor Ng Wing Ma was another person that Woodbridge had known. I don't know whether he took a course with him; I doubt it, because he was in political science.

Levenson: How large was the program? I imagine it was very small in those days.

Bingham: Oh, it was a very small program. My family had been astonished when Woodbridge said he was going into Chinese studies; they'd never heard of scholarly Chinese people! They had known a lot about Europe, but nothing much about the Far East, I guess, like many people in those days. They associated Chinese with laundry men, and delivery people, and so on, so it was quite different for them to know about these scholarly Chinese and Japanese people who we were meeting out here.

Bingham: We enjoyed all our friendships and felt very fortunate, really.

The other people who were very good to us were Mr. and Mrs. Duncan McDuffie. He had been a friend of my father-in-law when he had studied out here. They had a beautiful house and garden on Roble Road. Duncan McDuffie had a big real estate firm.

They used to invite us to parties, but they also invited us just to come and enjoy the garden. I can remember one day we brought the two girls when they were about three and five, and they were running all over, barefoot on the grass lawn, having a glorious time.

We had by then left the first house we'd rented and rented one on La Loma Avenue that belonged to Professor and Mrs. Tolman. Later, the Tolmans came back before our lease was up because Professor Kuno had not approved Woodbridge's thesis, and we had to spend an extra month before leaving for China. So we had to get a house for a month, and you know how difficult that would be.

Well, Professor and Mrs. Lindforth were going away on sabbatical, so we had their house for a month. I'm still embarrassed to this day to think of how I left that house! We were in such a rush to get packed and get off on the ship, that I left the laundry in a pile and the house looked just terrible. I felt badly about it.

What could you do, you know, with two little children and we did have that same wonderful maid, Carrie Thomas, who'd been with us for four years, but she couldn't handle that kind of thing very well.

My mother had come to visit and so had my sister. I guess I just spent too much time sightseeing and doing things with them, at the very end.

Anyway, we finally got off for China.

Levenson: What year was this now?

Bingham: This was 1934, November.

Traveling to China

Levenson: So you'd been four years in Berkeley. Woodbridge had his Ph.D.

Bingham: Yes, it must have been four years, because it was November when we left. We spent a month in Hawaii. We went over to the island of Hawaii and stayed in a little, very simple hotel on the Parker Ranch

Bingham: land. Woodbridge knew one of the Von Holt young men, Ronald, who had a ranch on the north end of that island. He helped us find a car, and we were able to go down to the beach in the sunshine in the afternoons, because it was a part of the island where it was nice in the morning up on the heights where the hotel was but it poured in the afternoon.

However, down at the beach, it was nice and sunny. So we'd play around the hotel, in that area in the mornings and then we'd take the children to the beach in the afternoon. Woodbridge went riding quite a bit with the Von Holts.

One day they were having a roundup, so they asked me to come along, too. I had a great time. We went riding through tall woods and fern forests, and then we went out across the fields while they rounded up the cattle. We got them headed down toward the shore, where they tied them around their horns and led them out by rowboat to the ship, from where they were hoisted aboard and shipped to Honolulu. It was quite an operation, because a few of them would kick up a fuss; didn't want to go in the water.

However, once they got quite a few of them in the water, the others went along more readily. But it was fun to have a taste of that life, the ranch life in Hawaii.

Woodbridge knew these people because his father had come from Hawaii, and also had gone back a number of times and had taken his sons one summer to spend the whole summer on Maui. And they rode a great deal and met people in the area.

We had a very nice boat trip across the Pacific from Honolulu to Shanghai, and I remember seeing a beautiful flying fish from the bow of the ship--these fish would fly out of the water for a little distance.

We stopped at the ports of Yokohama and Kobe on the way, and went down through the Inland Sea on a beautiful day and then down to Shanghai where it was beastly weather and cold, grey, and foggy. You know what a sea town can be like in that sort of November weather. Really miserable. Dr. Yen, I think his name was, whom Woodbridge had known at Yale-in-China in 1924 came to meet us at the boat.

We'd had a Chinese amah, Ah Yo, who had worked for a family in Peking and went with them to the United States. She wanted to return to China, so they sent her with us. My parents knew these people, and they had agreed to pay her passage home when she wished to return. She helped look after the two little girls. She traveled with us from San Francisco to Shanghai.

Bingham: The sad thing was that her trunk was lost on the way. We did all we could to trace it, but we never were able to locate it, and she had been given gifts by this lady and all her friends. Souvenirs of America, and all her clothes in it, and she was feeling just dreadfully about it, of course. So were we because it was inexcusable.

We spent the day with the Yens. The girls and I stayed at the house, and I was always surprised because the Chinese houses in those days, they did what they thought the Americans did in the way of furnishing their homes. Here were all these overstuffed chairs with lace on the arms and lace at the back. We never had seen that before; at least I hadn't.

They were most kind. Woodbridge went off with Dr. Yen to meet some other Mandarin scholars. Then we took the train up to Peking and I don't remember anything about that ride.

Life in Peking and First Impressions of China

Bingham: We went by train to Peking and they put us up at the language school in a house that had been vacated by a professor who was returning to the United States. We stayed there for a while. Then Dr. and Mrs. [William B.] Pettus came to see us after they'd been to a party one day shortly after our arrival. It was just about Christmas-time by then and they said they'd met this couple who had a house they'd just renovated--a Chinese house--and they had a part of it they wanted to rent.

We went the next day to see Dr. and Mrs. Hsien Wu and rented the place that they had fixed up so nicely. They'd installed steam heat in the buildings all around one courtyard, which was the front part of where they lived. I guess they'd done it for theirs, too. So we rented that. We had a happy time there from January, 1934 to June, 1936.

The house we lived in was the south section of a large, walled-in Chinese compound. It was down a little alley called Fang Chia Yuan, in the east part of the city, about two blocks east of the big main street. There was one gate and a gateman for all of who lived within the wall. Beside our part, there were two single houses occupied by two groups of nurses from the P.U.M.C. [Peking Union Medical College (and hospital)].

Our house had three courtyards, and was approached from the gate by a covered open passageway which led to a small hall between our bedroom and that of our two daughters. Passing through this hall

Bingham: led you to a square courtyard which had two garden beds with a small apple tree in the center of each. Across this courtyard was our main building where were our living room and dining area at one end. At the other end, there was a small room where I had a desk and could have a Chinese teacher instruct me our second year in Peking.

There was a narrow courtyard behind this building. A double row of six little apple trees. It was beautiful when the apple trees were in bloom and the moon was full. The double row of trees led to a pretty gate, always closed, which gave access to our landlord's portion of the compound. At the time when the whole walled compound had belonged to one family, the Wu Hsiens also had the spacious garden which was north (behind) the houses occupied by the nurses. Dr. Wu was in the process of relandscaping that garden and in digging, they would find small old pottery dishes or tiles.

Woodbridge and I both attended the language school, Hwa Wen Hsüeh Hsiao, the College of Chinese Studies, of which Mr. Pettus was head. For a while we both went all day. But after a bit, I decided it was too much for me. I'd just go in the mornings because I had the children to manage and be with, and the household to run when we moved to the Chinese house.

In the language school, we didn't have group teaching that I can remember. I just remember being in a room with one man who would ask me different words and made me repeat the words I'd had in the session before, and teach me a few new ones. Once I learned a few words, then he would give me some Chinese sayings, like some sayings of Confucius. Or Su-yün which were little phrases that were commonly known.

Levenson: Did you study characters?

Bingham: No, I didn't. I found that what I really needed was speaking, and the characters were very difficult. I did study a few, but it was not very successful. I couldn't remember them very well, because I had no real use for them, and so Woodbridge did much better than I did, because he needed to use the characters.

Levenson: What were your first impressions of China?

Bingham: The Shanghai impression was a dismal one because it was so dark and grey. A confusing, busy city. The Yens' home was furnished much as my Grandmother Griswold's in Erie, Pennsylvania might have been except that there were lace pieces on the arms and center of the chair backs of upholstered furniture to protect the fabric from soiling where hands and head would touch it. There was at least one Victorian type glass case with shelves on which nice China was displayed. The Yens were very cordial and made us feel welcome.

Bingham: Peking was more beautiful and sunny as well as friendly. A most interesting place in which to live. Peking--I want to say that after I'd been there for a while, I was charmed by it. But we had a lot of illness at first, as many foreigners do, both colds and intestinal troubles. We got acclimated after a while.

I think my first impressions were that it was difficult to keep house. I had several servants so it wasn't a question of the labor I had to do at all. It was just a question of personalities and ordering, managing, a household. I wasn't too accomplished at that.

Mr. and Mrs. Gleysteen at the Presbyterian Mission were most helpful in helping us find good servants. An amah [nurse] first, while we were still in the hosue at the language school. Then a cook and "number one boy." These all had to have thorough medical examinations. We each had a rickshaw man who had his own rickshaw, Erh Chi for Wood, and T'ung pulled me.

All I'd had before was this one colored maid in Cambridge who came by the day, and then a maid that Mrs. Bingham had had who came to help us in the summertime, and her daughter. They were rather simple people to handle. They were Irish.

Of course, the language barrier was something until I got accustomed to it. So a couple of times I ordered the wrong things just because I didn't use the right intonation. I ordered chicken one day and we got eggplant for lunch! He did make good American food.

Our house in Peking was unfurnished so we had to inquire about getting furniture for it. Fortunately we met some friends quite soon and they were able to tell me of a second-hand place so we could get beds that were good, and other furniture. But the main thing was we met the [Owen] Lattimores, and Eleanor Lattimore was very helpful in taking us out to the Chinese town outside of Ch'ien-men and getting good furniture at shops there. Eleanor taught me a lot about how to choose good Chinese furniture. We had to bundle up a lot to go shopping. I even bought Chinese men's winter shoes--felt soled, velvet topped, and warmly lined. They were warmer to wear than our own leather ones, even with wool stockings!

Then later on she heard of a woman who was moving back to Shanghai, a Chinese lady, who needed to sell her old furniture. So we were able to get some nice things there: three tables and two chairs that were very fine, old ones. Eventually I found a red lacquer table and four chairs, which set was very pretty but impractical because it chipped so easily. But we finally put it all together and had in our living room a comfortable couch and two comfortable chairs, and good beds for us all.

Bingham: Then we had to look around for rugs. Mrs. Fette, of the Fette Rug Company, had gotten to know my family and was interested in helping us find handsome ones. So she sent out one or two to our house on approval, and we took one for our bedroom which, unfortunately, we did not keep. Later on she said, "I have one that I had made for my daughter." The daughter was being married to a man who liked Spanish things but not Chinese things. He was a man I had known in New York. So she wasn't going to give it to her and would I like to buy it? And so we did buy that rug and it's our living room rug now.

Levenson: It's beautiful.

Bingham: It's a copy of an old one and we love it very much. It's lasted just beautifully. Never faded in over fifty years!

Levenson: I've always admired it. Blue and deep ivory.

Bingham: One evening in the spring, I gave a little dinner party for some of the people who'd been nice to us. And what do you suppose? The restaurant where friends suggested I make arrangements sent the waiters, the cook, and a little stove to cook on, and they cooked the food outdoors in the courtyard near the kitchen. And even brought the plates and the chopsticks. That was the way they did things in China in those days.

Levenson: Was this Chinese food?

Bingham: Yes, it was Chinese food.

Levenson: How delicious!

Bingham: And we had little lanterns on the table. I found some cunning little red wooden ones with red lampshades, painted with flowers on them. We had a pretty setting there. The apple trees in bloom, and it was moonlight, and then there were little lanterns on the table, and our friends. But we had to take chairs from the living room to sit at the dining table, so there was kind of confusion after dinner because they had to move the chairs back in. We didn't have a real dining room set.

Levenson: It sounds idyllic.

Bingham: It was great fun, and it was all such a new experience.

Woodbridge had to go down to Shanghai one time and he had told me before he went, "Do go to Mrs. Calhoun's for cocktails this week." She had, by the way, a cocktail party every week and invited friends, and often there were guests from other countries who came.

Levenson: Any Chinese?

Bingham: I think probably; I don't remember meeting any specific Chinese there. I went to this cocktail party without Woodbridge, and who was there but Gene Tunney [the famous boxer] and his wife, Polly. She had known some of my family in the East. They said they were going to the Great Wall the next day. Had I been? I said no, I hadn't been. "Well, would you like to come with us?" I said, "Yes, I would love to go with you. Do you have room?"

They had everything arranged and evidently could get me in all right. I enjoyed the trip with them. I must tell you the night before I was playing with the children, Anne and Clare, in their room, and Clare banged her head against my head, so I had a big black eye the next morning, and I got teased about that plenty during the next day!

So I asked Gene Tunney what he did about his black eyes. "Oh," he said, "you put a piece of raw beef on them and that takes the pain and the color out."

Levenson: Did you try it?

Bingham: I didn't have the beef to do it with, but it was too late by then. You have to do it right away.

Levenson: What was he like?

Bingham: He was a very genial person, very nice; easy to talk to. She was charming. Quite slender with dark hair. I found that she was a cousin of my sister-in-law. They were both quite intellectual people.

The other people along on this trip were Mr. and Mrs. La Gorce. At that time he was the second in command, so to speak, to Mr. Grosvenor, who was the head of the National Geographic Society and magazine.

We went up to the Great Wall and walked around a bit there. They hadn't repaired it as nicely as it is today, but it was perfectly possible to walk on it. The train stopped quite near the wall, within easy walking distance.

After the Great Wall, we went by car down through hills and across part of a flat valley to one of the Imperial Ming tombs which were situated at the foot of hills around this flat valley, east of Peking, and walked there quite a bit. It was a nice place, out in a big valley with great big stone animals on each side as you went up the avenue.

Levenson: Were the stone animals well maintained?

Bingham: Yes, they looked pretty good at that time. In fact, when I went back a few years ago, they were in very good shape, and didn't look as though they had had to be renewed or mended in any way. In the tomb enclosure there were tall old pine trees and some buildings.

After that, I think we must have driven back to Peking, because I don't remember taking the train again. But it was a nice day. It was not too hot or too cold, and we had a very pleasant time. The other trip that I took later in the spring with Woodbridge and a Dr. and Mrs. Duade from the Peking University Medical College, was up to Ta T'ung to see the caves at Yunkan. That was a wonderful trip.

We went by train and stayed at a little inn. The caves were very impressive. There were some wonderful statues and wall paintings in them. By the time we came back on the train, we were all awfully tired; I don't think we were very conversational. [laughter]

Levenson: I would love to see them.

Bingham: Ta T'ung itself was an interesting old town. It had some great buildings, I suppose they were temples, or government buildings, similar to but not anything comparable to the Imperial City in Peking, because the roofs were not that beautiful--gold tile--they were just plain tile roofs, but the size of them was much larger than the ordinary dwelling.

Summer at Yü tao ho, Shansi

Bingham: In summertime, between these two expeditions, we went to Yü tao ho. The Lattimores were going there and thought we would be interested in going too. We looked into it further and found that there was an old mill for rent which had been made livable for Americans by Mr. Arthur Hummel [Senior] of the Library of Congress. He had been a long time in China and that's where he'd spent summers with his family.

We rented this mill, sight unseen of course, and no pictures of it. Eleanor said we'd have to take some food for the summer for our families, so we went to the grocery store and ordered canned things, including butter, and lots of canned milk, dried milk, and other things that were not perishable, and had them sent up and notified the people up there that they were coming. We also made out another order to be sent halfway through the summer, and that arrived safely too, eventually.

Bingham: We went up by train from Peking to Shih chia chuang and there transferred to a narrow-gauge railway. The train to Shih chia chuang from Peking was a very comfortable wagon lit type of car, so we all had comfortable beds to sleep in at night. We took our amah Cheng N'ai n'ai and our number one boy along because we knew we couldn't get people to help us up there easily.

We had to take some of our bedding along, because they told us there wouldn't be any in the mill. So we had bedding rolls and suitcases. In the morning we went into a little station restaurant where there were some Chinese men at another table. I remember the startled expression on the children's faces when one of the Chinese men, who'd ordered a fried egg, put the whole egg in his mouth on the end of a knife. [laughter] They couldn't get over that! We all had a good chuckle about it afterwards.

We ate a good breakfast and then we got on another little train and had the most beautiful ride up valleys up to Tai An. When at Tai An, there was a Belgian hotel that was now run by Chinese. They put us in the annex because they hadn't had a previous reservation for us. The annex beds were like you read about old New England beds that had rope across them instead of springs. We were very thankful we had all that bedding because we could sleep on it because we didn't need much on top of us because it was summer and hot.

The next morning, in a little Ford car, the old model, we piled the baggage on the top; the number one "boy," a heavy middle-aged man, in front with the driver, and the amah and the two children, and Woodbridge and me, in the back. It was kind of squashed company. But we drove across country to the mill that we were going to, which was up a little valley not as far as Fen Chow. Fortunately the driver knew where to take us. We must have been quite a sight!

That was a perfectly lovely scene. The road going there was not good; it was all dirt road, very bumpy, but it was beautiful country to cross--a wide, agricultural valley with lots of grain being grown. Of course, the harvest season hadn't come yet, so it looked very luxuriant.

Levenson: What province was this?

Bingham: I think it was still in the same province as Peking, Hopeh.

We drove up the little road; I think it almost went to the mill, and then got unbundled. The mill had a porch all the way around the outside of it and it had a great big gate like the old buildings in Europe with an arched gate and great iron studs on it. It looked quite forbidding but very impressive.

Bingham: When we went into the courtyard in the center, there was a pedestal and they'd put a grindstone on top of it. It was a good place to put things on if you needed to, in place of a table. We found it quite useful later. The porch was all around where the bedrooms were. The bedrooms were not very large. It was a little bit dark because there were not many windows, only the ones inside toward the courtyard. The main living room was where the grain was milled to flour and it had a beautiful floor because they always had a cloth that swept around with the wheel afterwards. This cloth sweeping around when the mill wheel turned, had polished the floor to a beautiful shine. Big wide boards and a nice high ceiling.

Outside the living room there was a little porch where I used to spend quite a bit of time in the mornings, reading and writing letters to my family. The amah would always take the children in the morning and we took them in the afternoon.

As you went out the main doors from the mill, you looked onto a little grassy plot under the trees where there was a spring, so we had our own spring water. We didn't have to do all that boiling of water which we had to do in Peking.

The number one boy would go down with the pails, which were old kerosene five-gallon tins that were discarded and well washed out, and get the water and bring it to the house, one tin at each end of a bamboo pole. He'd leave some in the kitchen and some in our rooms for washing up or drinking. It was a very lovely setting. Really a delightful summer as I think back on it.

Across the way from us was another mill where some English China Inland Mission people were, and they conducted a Sunday service at still another mill down the stream. We used to go to the Sunday service because we enjoyed singing the hymns and getting to know the people there.

The Lattimores warned us about getting to know them. They said, "You just wait. You'll get caught up by these people sooner or later."

The last time we went was to a mill up the stream from us. Sure enough, there was a woman preacher who had on a black gown and she really laid down the law of Christianity to us. After the service she walked up to my husband and took his arm, and strode out with him. At the same time another woman came up to me and walked out a different door with me. I walked home, and Woodbridge didn't come for a long time. Finally he came and I said, "What happened?"

Bingham: "Well, he said, "she just wanted to give me some more talk after the sermon." I had talked back at my lady. I just wasn't going to take all this stuff. But he evidently wanted to hear her out, and so, courteously he listened.

Levenson: What was it? Trying to get you to join the church?

Bingham: Yes, and trying to make us realize that their way was the only way to live.

Levenson: Were there any Chinese at these services?

Bingham: No, there weren't. It was just the few foreigners who were up there. Americans mostly I guess. It was a very small congregation as I remember it. Now there may have been Chinese, but I don't recall. I don't remember meeting any.

We used to go on walks every afternoon, late afternoon, with the children. The Lattimores had a son, David. We'd go on wonderful walks across the countryside. It was an interesting country. There would be little temples. The valleys had been washed out over the years because it was what they called loess country, where the sand and dust of ages had been blown from the north desert and dried the lands. It was piled up and easily eroded by the rainstorms. They were gulches, and you couldn't see them as you looked across the landscape to little temples in the distance on the top of the plain.

You'd look across and say, "Well, we'll go to that temple today." But you'd start off and you'd have to go down a gulch and up again, and before you had gone anywhere near the temple, you'd realize that you couldn't make it because there were so many of these gulches. But it was interesting to see the farmers and to see what they were growing.

Much of the country was terraced. Little patches of melons or corn or millet. Beautiful melons, they grew. Somewhere they had wonderful peach trees. I can remember our cook used to go out and get peaches and apricots for us. When it was peach season, we had them fresh and cooked, and in jam. Likewise in apricot season.

Our cook was a character. He had come from the village of Fenchou and he'd cooked for Americans before. But he was an opium smoker. Sometimes in the evening he'd take off on his bicycle and go back to Fenchou and come back the next day in bad shape. So if I'd order one thing, he'd often produce something quite different. But he was pretty good about always coming back.

One day the nurse came to me, our amah Cheng N'ai na'ai who we'd brought, and said, "I would like to sleep in the children's part tonight, please." So I said, "Why?" And she said, "it's been

Bingham: raining so hard, I'm afraid the roof will not be good." So I said, "All right, you may do that." By George, in the middle of the night evidently, the roof did leak and the walls were made of these earth-like adobe blocks, and they just melted. The whole wall collapsed right where her bed had been. It was a lucky thing that she realized the situation.

We had fun watching them put the roof together again. It was just heavy beams and then the slats across them. Then they put a few boards. They had masses of mud and they set the tiles of the roof in the mud. There was no hooking them on to anything. It was very interesting.

One man stood down in the courtyard and threw each tile, one by one, up to the man on the roof. It was certainly a slow process, but it was very good to see what they did in the country. I'm sure the city roofs were not built that way.

Levenson: So you spent a couple of months there, did you?

Bingham: Yes, we spent about three months up there. Then we had a toilet place where the roof did leak when it rained and you had to go to the toilet with an umbrella over your head. That amused us and complicated matters. I was thankful that our servants got along with the people in the country there.

The Lattimores decided one time that they weren't getting good chicken, so they bought a lot of chickens from the village and decided to feed them and fatten them up. Well, they forgot to clip their wings, so one fine day the chickens all flew back to their old home. [laughter] Their cook was a nice old man from Peking who they'd had for years. He had to go back to the village on a nearby slope and collect the chickens again.

We had some good times in between. Woodbridge was studying the Chinese language part of the time with a teacher, Feng Chia Sheng who came from Peking to see his family somewhere to the west of where we were, then visited us while teaching Woodbridge. He had been glad to come and stay with us for a while to help Woodbridge. I think he also helped Owen Lattimore.

Owen decided to shave his hair off and moreover he painted his skull with iodine. He said he always had dandruff and he was going to get rid of it. Well, he got a name in the country for being a spy. They'd never seen anybody like that before! There were said to be Communists not far off over the mountains from us. We were warned. We always were getting little threats that maybe the Communists would come in a few days.

Bingham: We had had to come to Fenchou with money, because we didn't have any way of cashing checks or anything. We had to take silver pieces, so we hid them all up near the rafters. There was a ledge under the rafters of our bedroom. We put a few here and a few there, in case the bandits came. Of course they never came. But there was a group of two or three men who did come and sit at the mill where the CIM [China Inland Mission] missionaries were, across the stream from us. They set out a cloth on the ground and had antiques--little dishes and little embroidered pieces, and things like that. They claimed to be salesmen of antiques, but I'm sure they were sent to see what we were doing because they thought it was so unusual for these families to come up there and stay. Especially after Owen shaved his head.

Levenson: Spies for the central government, the Kuomintang?

Bingham: I don't know. We just surmised that somebody wanted to watch what we were doing. No, nothing ever made us uncomfortable. I don't think they followed us on our walks, but they might have.

Finally, at the end of the summer, Owen and Carl Wittfogel, who was visiting him, and Woodbridge went off to climb Hua Shan and go to Sian in Shensi Province across the Yellow River. The ladies* and our children and amahs packed into a little bus that was antiquated, and drove back to Tai An and got the train down to Shih chia chuang and back to Peking. Finally about two weeks later, the men returned to Peking.

Levenson: Did they have a good trip?

Bingham: They had a wonderful trip, and Woodbridge took some beautiful pictures of the mountains and the scenery. I was glad I hadn't had to go on that trip, though, because it was quite a rough trip, and I'm not much for climbing mountains.

General Comments

Bingham: One spring Woodbridge and I did take a trip down to Tai shan and there we climbed that mountain. We stayed with some missionaries the night before and after. They had told us that there would be bearers who would have chairs; we could be carried up. I said to

*Eleanor Lattimore, her friend Dolly Tyler and I, Anne, Clare Bingham and David Lattimore and two amahs and our "boy," nine of us.

Bingham: Woodbridge, "I don't want to be carried up. I want to climb this mountain. If we come down, they can carry me down because I can't bear to have people carrying me up."

The Tai shan path was mostly large stone steps. They were just large granite steps. But there were little places to stop here and there for small temples. Finally when we reached the top, we faced this tremendous long staircase that went up to a gateway that led to the main temple on top of the mountain. We didn't go up there; we thought we'd seen enough by then.

We came down, and I did sit in the chair to be carried down. It was a totally different experience than I'd ever had. There were beggars along the way, lying in the middle of the path. My chair was on poles carried by men who kept to the side of the path, and carried me sideways over these beggars who were lying in the middle. That was, I felt, a very disturbing situation. To have people underneath you like that seemed very uncomfortable.

Unfortunately, we just had to tell them to go; that you didn't want to give them anything, because if you'd give them anything, there would be others cropping up and they would follow you. Anyway, even if you gave a small amount to them, they would keep following you. There were quite a few beggars in those days.

Levenson: Psychologically, how did you deal with the question of the enormous gap of poverty and suffering between you and so many of the Chinese?

Bingham: I'm afraid you just had to take a hard-boiled attitude and say, "You're there for a purpose, to learn about China, to learn the language, and to keep a house," as I was. I just had not to think too much about the difficulties of the people. But it did trouble me a good deal, especially one time when we went to Yenching and came back in June, I think it was. The leaves and many branches were all off the willow trees and I said, "What happened?"

"Oh," they said, "people are so hungry they just pull the leaves off and eat them." So I thought, good gracious, to come to that state of affairs must be perfectly awful. They also broke branches off for fuel.

Yes, of course there were times when I felt just terribly about the poverty. You'd see people in the little hutongs, the little side streets, and they would be badly clothed and badly fed, and the children would have terrible diseases on their faces. What could they do? They couldn't afford to go to a hospital, and it was really tragic. But there wasn't anything I could do about it, so why should I take too much time when I was supposed to be doing something else, worrying about it? I look back on it as a good

Bingham: experience in a lot of ways, because I can say to people in this country who think they're poor, "You should see what it was like in China in those days." But I hope we never get to that state.

Levenson: You mentioned Communists earlier. Was this much talked about?

Bingham: Not among our friends, no. But we knew there were rebels of different sorts. I don't know how closely connected to communism they were, but that's what they were called, that were in the hinterlands. Also there were still warlords around, so it was still an upset time.

The British people could tell their citizens not to go places, but the American Embassy was not allowed to do that. They could warn us that there were problems, but it was up to each individual to decide whether they should go or not. We had heard that it wasn't safe to go to Yu ta ho. We decided as long as there were other Americans up there, that we'd risk it. I'm glad we did, because we would have had a very, very hot summer in Peking.

The Lattimores, we felt, had known the country much better than we did and had lived in China longer than we had, and they thought it was perfectly all right. So did the Fairbanks. They had traveled a lot in China before we met them. We felt that people who'd been there more than we had were people whose advice we should take.

Levenson: Did you make any Chinese friends during your stay?

Bingham: Yes, we did. Our landlord Hsien Wu and his wife Daisy were good friends. They would invite us for "family dinners." We'd have a virtual feast there. We had to be careful not to think that the first course was it. We had awfully good times with them and with the four or five nurses who lived in the other little houses in the same big compound. They'd come to these dinners too. One of the nurses got married there and I was invited to go to the wedding. It was a very simple affair. She was a sweet person. The other nurse, Connie Tennant, later came to San Francisco to be head nurse for children at the old Stanford Hospital.

The Wus also had children--I think there were five or six of them--The youngest one, Hsiao Di Di, was just the age of one of our children.

One of the surgeons at PUMC and his wife had a boy, Shumo. This was Dr. and Mrs. Harold Loucks. The same age as the Lattimores' boy. So the three of us American ladies got together and had our little ones play once or twice a week if we could. They'd either come to my place or Eleanor's or to Swish Loucks' place. She lived in one of the compounds that belonged to the PUMC, where they had nice western houses made out of yellow bricks. We met Dr. and Mrs. Claude Faulkner through Mrs. Loucks. He became a very famous doctor at the New York-Cornell Medical School.

Bingham: We had very good times also with Edmund and Marianne Clubb, in the American Embassy. He was third secretary at the time. She was an artist and painted. Edmund used to have little lunch parties for the men to which Woodbridge was often invited. There were Chinese and Americans, and they would have scholarly discussions or talks about politics. Woodbridge found this a very enriching experience. Edmund and Marianne got to be good friends of ours.

Levenson: Did you ever meet the Snows, Edgar Snow?

Bingham: Yes, I think we did meet them. His wife at that time was writing for the Saturday Evening Post, under a different name than Snow. I think she used her maiden name. [Nym Wales]

We were very lucky. We met some very interesting people during our stay there. Some of the Chinese that we got to know were wonderful. There was Professor and Mrs. William Hung at Yenching whom we went to visit. Mrs. Hung used to stop in and see me sometimes because she wanted to be sure we were getting along all right. I would ask her advice about things I was puzzled about. William Hung was a scholar with the Harvard-Yenching Institute. We saw them later in Cambridge too. They had a terribly tough time during the Japanese occupation. I didn't get all the story of that, because I don't think she liked to talk about it. And I don't blame her.

Levenson: Did you know the [Y.R.] Chaos there? [Yuen Ren and Buwei]

Bingham: No, we didn't know the Chaos. We didn't meet them till we got back to Berkeley, when we became good friends.

Then there was another professor, Hsu Hsi-hsu, out at Yenching. I didn't get to know them at all, but Woodbridge saw something more of him at Edmund Clubb's. I always thought that name was wonderful.

The other people whom we came to know quite well were Mr. and Mrs. Nelson T. Johnson. He was consul general. We didn't have an embassy in Peking in those days. Mrs. Johnson asked me to help with the Girl Scouts. I didn't know anything about the Girl Scouts at all, so I had to ask her what their purpose was and what we had to do. She said that she always asked American ladies to do this if she felt they were capable of helping her.

I worked with Alice Gleysteen, whose parents were the people at the Presbyterian mission who had been so helpful to us in getting servants.

Levenson: Did you enjoy the Scouts? .

Bingham: Oh yes, I did. Alice was a tremendous help. I didn't know anything, so she had to teach me as well as the Scouts! But we did all sorts of things. We met at the American School. There were both Chinese and Americans and other nationalities there as students. We'd teach them how to light bonfires with practically no sticks; we did have matches. There was a big schoolyard, so it was very good for this. Then we went through teaching them knots. Of course we had to learn first. We had quite a jolly time together. Also we helped them work for badges.

We played games. We were trying to teach them good sportsmanship; tried to teach them about republican ways, America's ways, and make them feel patriotism for their own country. They were Americans and French, and other nationalities; and Chinese also.

Alice Gleysteen's brother Ted Gleysteen, and his wife Mary, later became very close friends of ours. I rather lost track of Alice, who married a minister and finally came back to live in Canada. I don't know why they chose that instead of the United States.

But Ted Gleysteen became a good friend later on.

Levenson: What were you living on? Did Woodbridge have a fellowship, or was it private money?

Bingham: No, it was our private income. Both of our families helped us in those days. In fact, we were married just before the Depression, as I think I mentioned to you. I look back on that and feel our families were wonderfully generous to have done this, because they did have a big family of other children. We, of course, could live on so much less in Peking in those days than we could in this country. That's why we were able to get the rugs and the furniture and so on. Of course we sold the furniture when we left Peking, so it wasn't a dead loss.

Levenson: But you kept the rugs.

Bingham: We kept the rugs, I should say. [laughter]

I remember when Woodbridge went to Shanghai that time, I was able to go to the Great Wall. He said, "What can I get for you in Shanghai that you can't find here?"

"Oh," I said, "I need a couple of straw hats because the ones here are just incredible." I knew Shanghai was quite a fancy, fashionable place and would have shops that would have some nice ones. So he came back with one particular one I remember. It was a bright green; it was quite heavy straw. I remember wearing that to go out to Yenching to visit the William Hungs one time. He was professor of Chinese history associated with the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

Bingham: The sun was so hot, and my being fair-skinned, I needed protection from it. So we had to make do with what we had oftentimes.

Levenson: Were you all well?

Bingham: Oh no, we had constant colds the first year we were there. The second year we got along pretty well. We had a lot of colds because we weren't used to whatever germs they had. And we had lots of upset tummies because of their kind of food and their germs that we weren't accustomed to.

In fact, the second year we went to a tea party of a Chinese friend and they had lettuce sandwiches, and I made the big mistake of eating but one lettuce sandwich, and I came down with bacillary dysentery which put me in the hospital for a week or ten days. And that was miserable!

But we survived. I think back on it as a wonderful experience.

Levenson: Was it "the years that were fat" for you as it was for George Kates?

Bingham: In a way it was. But I took my housekeeping pretty seriously, and I was awfully upset when we'd get sick. Because of having a feeling that something hadn't been washed properly which I perhaps should have made the cook more careful about.

Our doctor was a woman, Dr. Lois Todd. Her husband was an engineer who had helped the Chinese with controlling the floods of the Yellow River. They had had a house in the compound of the College of Chinese Studies.

Lois Todd was a wonderful character. They later came to live in Palo Alto. We saw them several times there. They had a family of four children.

Levenson: She must have been a remarkable woman.

Bingham: She really was. In her day there were very few medical doctors who were women. But she was an excellent doctor. Besides being an excellent doctor, she knew China so well that she could be a great help in advising us also.

Actually we had a very good time, on the whole, in Peking because there were other people like the Fairbanks, the Boddes, and Hurley Creels, Knight Bickerstaff and Camilla. We got to know all these people and we had lovely times with them. Once a month or so we'd meet and have dinner and have a little talk by whoever was the host.

Bingham: It was quite fun to go to the Fairbanks because they always did something very unusual.

Levenson: What was your impression of John and Wilma in those days?

Bingham: I was very in awe of them because they were very bright, and I hadn't realized until I read John's autobiography recently* that he had been in China so much longer than we had, and they had traveled a lot, and they'd become acquainted with many Chinese people, and they were very, very well up in the scholarly world at that time even.

George Kates was another person we enjoyed greatly.

Levenson: I enjoyed his book.+

Bingham: Later on he did a book on Chinese furniture. He was a very charming person.

The second year we were there, my mother came out with some friends. She had a girlhood friend who was very wealthy and had a yacht. They sailed all the way from Marrakech, Morocco to Shanghai. Mrs. Moses Taylor and her group of friends wanted to rent a house, so I asked George Kates to help me find something. Between George Kates and our friends, the Clubbs, at the consulate, we were able to find a Chinese house complete with servants for a month (January). But it was not heated, and those poor older people who came out were completely unaccustomed to this sort of thing. It was a fine, large house but not modernized.

Some of them resorted to going to the Peking Hotel instead of staying in the Chinese house!

Levenson: Did you live entirely Western style, or did you have some Chinese food?

Bingham: We had American food. Our cook had been trained by the Presbyterian mission people, and we kept in close touch with them because they had a good hospital. We always had to have everybody that we employed examined medically before they came to be sure they were healthy and not carrying something we might catch. That was another hazard.

*John King Fairbank, Chinabound; A Fifty Year Memoir, New York, Harper Row, 1982.

+George Kates, The Years That Were Fat, New York, Harper, 1952.

Levenson: Did you have any sense of the ominous nature of the Japanese-Chinese confrontation?

Bingham: Yes, I did. I forgot to mention it--When we were in Peking the last few months we were there, in 1936 it would be, the Japanese had done what they called enlarge their garrisons. They had men who rode these great big horses on the glacis, they called it. A big parade ground near the Peking Hotel. We were very startled by that. The horses were large and splendid, and the Japanese so short that their legs stuck out sideways.

Also, I went into one of the foreign shops one time where I used to trade, at a store where they had linens and things like buttons and towels that you couldn't find in the Chinese shops. One day there was a Japanese customer there. He was getting the courteous German salesman to pull everything down off the shelves. He'd ask for towels; then he'd ask for pillowcases; then he'd ask for something else. He didn't give the man time to put them away. He just kept asking for different items, and I could see that he was being very unpleasant.

Levenson: You said that there were spies. For the central government?

Bingham: I presume so, yes. So we had those kinds of things to think about. Yet, when we really were in Japan, most of the time we were quite nicely treated.

Levenson: Were you in Peking at the time of the Marco Polo Incident?

Bingham: No, it happened while we were up at Unzen [Japan], so we didn't really hear much about it, because I don't remember getting newspapers up there.

Levenson: Were you aware of what was going on in Europe? Were the Jewish refugees becoming very visible in Peking at that time?

Bingham: No, we didn't know of that. Partly we weren't in touch with the foreign community as a whole; we knew the American community. But we didn't know many of the people in Peking's international group. So we had a lot that passed by us at that time.

Eight Months in Japan, July, 1936 - March, 1938

Bingham: I had my appendix removed in June at the Peking Union Medical College Hospital (now National Hospital) by Dr. Harold Loucks. The care I received was excellent and the attending young Chinese doctor, after the operation was skillful and confident and fine.

1. Daughters Anne and Clare, 1932
2. Left to right, brothers Dwight and John Griswold.
Seated, Ursula with Clare, Evelyn Griswold with
Anne, Berkeley, 1933
3. Ursula as "Machut", French Section Club play,
Berkeley, 1932
4. Anne in rickshaw with T'ung, Ursula's rickshaw "boy"
5. Courtyard of the Bingham's house, 1 Fang Chia Yuan, Peking
6. Ursula on Great Wall with Gene Tunney, 1935



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.

Bingham: Then finally, in 1936, after selling much of our furniture and shipping home the pieces we wanted as well as the rugs, we left for Japan. The trip was very different than I'd expected. I thought it would be much shorter. We went by train to Tientsin and then took a ship from there to Moji across from Shimonoseki. The Japanese train went through Nagasaki and up to--I don't remember the final station where we got off. But we got a car and went up this steep mountain to Unzen. Here we had a little tiny shingled cottage in the woods. Unzen is a village famous for its hot springs and resort hotels. It was early spring, and it was the most beautiful place. There were wild azaleas all through the woods and little paths that we could walk through. So every afternoon we continued our afternoon walks as we had the summer before in Shansi province.

We had these little teapots that we'd gotten on the train and they were, of course, empty by then. The girls collected land crabs and put them in the teapots. One evening Woodbridge and I were sitting reading, and we heard this little tick-tick-tick, and here was one of the lids moving up and down. It was land crabs inside these teapots!

The girls collected cicada shells too, and put them in baskets but there were always a few live cicadas among them.

The cottage had solid wooden shutters to use when rain and storms came; windows in the bedrooms let in light and air which also came in through cracks between the shutters. The sun shone brightly the day we arrived, so we unpacked our suitcases. The next day it began to rain. This continued for days, which combined with summer heat, was conducive to the growth of generous amounts of mildew on shoes, suitcases, and books, to our dismay.

Our bed was a historical iron one, so as soon as we could, we found a carpenter to build us a two-mat size platform on which we put two Japanese tatami, and purchased two comfortable Japanese mattresses and covers. This proved to be a cool and good solution.

The two girls had a small room between ours and the rather primitive bathroom facilities. The mostly open air kitchen was beyond this.

The people who had the other cottages near us were all missionaries. One family was from Nanking. Their name was Jones. I don't remember what their first names were. They all had children; it was fortunately a very congenial group. There wasn't much social life, but it was very pleasant going back and forth and taking these walks together and exchanging short visits over questions that came up now and then. We'd go up to the village to watch what the Japanese were doing, and here would be a woman near a hot spring with a little basket with eggs, holding them over this hot spout that was coming out and cooking the eggs in the hot steam. [laughter]

Bingham: There were hot baths that you could go to, and we finally did go to one of those. It was just like the regular Japanese public baths where you go into a big room and wash yourself off with soap and then take buckets of water and rinse off; then go into this great big pool. It's all hot water. This was sulphur water. It had a funny smell but it felt just delicious. There was an outdoor, icy-cold, swimming pool downhill from our cottage, fed by the small stream which we heard and had to cross to go to the village.

At Unzen, they made beautiful things out of tortoiseshell. I don't know where they got the tortoiseshell, but it was also a center that was famous for the tortoiseshell things that they made. Combs, brooches, small cases, and pretty hair pins and things. I bought a comb that I kept for many years.

We had a servant, an older woman, who cooked on two little hibachis for us, and she would do most of the ordering. And there was a man, Seikisan, who came by every day selling eggs. The cook and Seiki were friends. The marvelous ice cream which she made required eight eggs! We used dried tinned milk (klim) during our time in China and Japan.

Seiki purported to be an intermediary between the farmers and the people who needed to buy their produce, but later on we found out through the friends who lived in Nagasaki, that he was a spy, because they had questioned at customs Woodbridge's coming to Japan with all the books that he had. Woodbridge brought up two boxes of books to study and to read.

At the port, we'd had a lot of trouble to get cleared. On the ship the night before we landed, I had sat in the lounge for a while and somebody asked me about my passport. I pulled it out of my handbag and looked up what they were inquiring about, put it back in, and went down to my stateroom.

The next morning when I got off the ship, and they asked for my passport, it wasn't there in my handbag. So I didn't know what in the world had happened. We waited quite a long time and finally, a little man came from the boat and he said, "We found this. It is yours." I don't know where they found it, but somebody must have snuck in during the night and taken it out of my handbag.

Levenson: Amazing.

Bingham: Yes. Let me see [pauses], I guess we took a train to get to the place where we went by car up the mountain. The train--we had to get lunch. What we did was wait till we got a station on the way and hung out the window. These sales people came by; some of them had little rice dishes, and one of them had some darling little bowls with rice

Bingham: and something on the top, with brown sauce on it. We bought some of those. Then we got tea in little pots, and the lids were the cups. They were very, very primitive looking pottery ware, unglazed pottery. The thing that was on the rice turned out to be eels, and I had always thought I'd never eat eels, but it was perfectly delicious.

Levenson: I love broiled eels!

Bingham: And I didn't find out till later. You don't find it very often here.

Levenson: You can get it in the sushi bars.

Bingham: Oh, really?

One time we went to the golf course to take a walk and they gave us a golf score just because we might be interested. On the golf score it said, "In case your ball should be removed by an outside agency, please replace it in the approximate position of where the ball had been," and we wondered who the outside agency was until a great big black crow came down and picked up a ball and flew up to its nest with it!

Evidently, the caddies used to go regularly and collect balls out of the crows' nests and sell them again. So it was worth their while to climb these big pine trees at the edge of the golf course.

We took a trip over to another part of the island where there was a volcano, Aso-san. We stayed at a little inn in a gulch, and the inn was right beside a stream. They had a great big, almost swimming-pool sized place the ladies could bathe. As usual, you soaped yourself off before you got into the big tub, and rinsed off.

I got into this big tub and tried to swim the length of it and back. It was terribly hot. The inn was in a beautiful location in this little gulch near Mount Aso. The mountain itself was quite a sight. We climbed up to the edge of the crater and found a little package of clothing there. It was customary sometimes for Japanese who wanted to commit suicide to go to a mountain like this and leave their belongings on the edge of the mountain and then jump into the inferno. That seemed like a terrible thing to do. But here was evidence of this having happened.

Bingham: I think we went over by bus that time. Then we took the bus back and the ferry back to Shimabara, the seaside village on a peninsula near Unzen where we used to take the girls swimming occasionally and where we saw a wonderful full moon festival in August, when they worship their ancestors. That was a beautiful scene. We went there in the evening.

Farmers had made boats of firmly packed straw and loaded them onto carts. Then they had their dinners, and drank plenty of wine. These reeling men then pulled the carts by their shafts past cemeteries, and lit them with lanterns taken from the graves of their ancestors. They poked rows of sticks into the sides of the boats for oars.

So, you saw these reeling men singing as they pulled the lighted, lantern-laden carts through the streets in full moonlight to the shore and into the water until the straw boats were afloat. The boats were pushed off so they sailed far off away from the shore and eventually sank as the waterlogged straw weighed them down. The singing ceased, the following crowd dispersed and all was again silent. Beautiful seaside moonlight reflected across the water.

Levenson: It must have been lovely.

Bingham: Our stay in Japan was quite an experience. Some of these beautiful things that we saw, and day-to-day life, some of it, was a little bit difficult for us all because we weren't linguists. The girls had learned some Chinese but they weren't too interested in learning Japanese.

There was lots of wild honeysuckle in the woods that we walked through, and azaleas of course, and rhododendron, so Unzen was a very pretty part of the country, and one not much frequented by foreign visitors. There were lots of Japanese vacationers there who populated the inns. Large inns too, they were. Handsome buildings, I suppose built in the late nineteenth century.

Levenson: Yes.

Living in Kyoto and Expeditions

Bingham: From there we went to Kyoto by train with a stop at Fukuoka; we stayed with a Dr. Cobb. His wife was in the United States. They were both Congregational missionaries. [brief phone interruption]

When we were at the Cobbs' house, Mrs. Cobb was in the United States on leave. Dr. Cobb was a small bright man. He had a wonderful study. As we'd sit at table, we had our two Daughters, Clare

Bingham: and Anne with us. When we'd sit at table and we didn't know a word, or some questions came up that we couldn't find the answer to it, he would rush into his study and look it up and come back with the answer. He had all kinds of dictionaries and encyclopedias. As I say, he was a very intelligent man.

His house was right at the edge of Doshisha University, because he, and Mrs. Cobb I think also, taught there. Another person that they introduced us to was a Miss Mary Denton. Miss Denton had lived there many years as a missionary teacher. She had her own house and she was quite a character. She helped us to find a place where we finally moved to live and have our own home in Kyoto for five months. It was the top floor of a mission building that belonged to some German Lutherans who were then missionaries.

Levenson: What was Woodbridge doing in Japan?

Bingham: He was learning the language with Miss Kuroha and I think probably collecting some books, but mostly learning the language, because he was specializing in Oriental history. This was part of what he needed to know.

Later, we had the top floor of a house--it was off a side street some little distance from the Doshisha, but Miss Denton would send us notes, "Please, please, please come to dinner tonight." Or "Please, please, please, please, meet me somewhere for dinner."

One time it was the day we moved in actually. She wanted us to come to Tudor House. Well, she spelled it Tudor. When we got the taxi and told him to go to Tudor House, (she gave us no address) I think she said it was on Karamatsu Street. He didn't know what we meant. We figured out it was the big house that looked like a Tudor house, so we stopped and went in. The charming man, the owner, was the head of the big department store, the Daimaru in Kyoto. He had a collection of albums where he'd put samples of different varieties of Japanese silks--different weaves, different dye patterns--and that was his hobby.

By the time we got there, they were serving dessert, which was a green tea ice cream--funny tasting stuff--but we found them very cordial and friendly people.

Miss Denton's entertaining was always spur-of-the-moment something. An American or some friend of hers had turned up and she wanted to have us for dinner or for lunch. We'd go and invariably it was baked beans and brown bread which she'd made herself. She thought the Americans would like to have that because they were eating Chinese food in a foreign country, or Japanese food.

Bingham: Well, it was very good brown bread and very good baked beans, actually, and healthy of course. It's not what you'd really serve guests, is it, Rosemary? [interviewer laughs] It was such hospitality you can't believe it! And always delightful company and conversation.

Levenon: I'm sorry. I shouldn't be laughing.

Bingham: It's all right. It's fun to think about these things.

Levenson: Yes indeed.

Bingham: But hospitality was what counted in her book, not the food she was presenting.

Levenson: Of course.

Bingham: So many different kinds of people were in touch with her. Professors and business people, students, missionaries, Americans and Japanese. I don't really remember specifically who we met there, but I know it was always interesting and we always enjoyed going to her house.

She lived right near the Cobbs, and near the Doshisha University.

Levenson: What did she teach?

Bingham: I think she taught English.

Levenson: Let's just relocate ourselves. What year was this?

Bingham: This was 1936. We left Kyoto in March 1937.

Levenson: How did you feel about the political situation? Because the Japanese had already invaded China.

Bingham: I felt we were treated very decently as Americans there. Though I must say, by the time we began to take the train to go to Tokyo and then to go to Yokohama, we realized that there were some very unfriendly characters among them. Later, some friends of ourse had a very hard time taking their children to Tokyo and then to get to the ship to Yokohama and home. But at the time we were there, they didn't seem to bother us.

Levenson: Or the potential for war with the United States? Did you feel any of that?

Bingham: I wasn't conscious of it. Possibly Woodbridge was but I wasn't. We were so thrilled with being able to see all of Kyoto and museums and go to temples where they were having festivals, and we got to know a family who lived only two blocks away from us. The daughter, Mie Kosugi, was just my age and we became good friends, and we still are. Miss Denton introduced us.

Levenson: A Japanese family?

Bingham: Yes, a Japanese family. They even invited us to New Years's at their house which was very seldom done for people who were not better known than we were.

Mie used to go to some of these festivals with us and explain to us what the dances were and what the festival was all about. Her brother who was older than she was and already had some influence in Kyoto, was able to get us space to go and watch a big parade, Jidai Matsuri, as they call it.

It was held in the Imperial Palace grounds. So we really were very fortunate. This was thanks to Miss Denton in a way, because Mie had been a student of hers at Doshisha.

Levenson: Did you have servants?

Bingham: We had two maids. We had a cook and a young woman who took care of the children supposedly. But I went shopping one day without the children and came back, and here was this little mob of small people outside our gate, and our children were up on the balcony of the house, looking out on the street, calling "Irashai!" which means, "Come, come!" So all these youngsters had gathered there.

Clare had been to the nursery school which was held in part of the grounds away from the house itslef. It was not at all successful because she kept getting colds all the time, and she didn't learn Japanese. Neither of the girls learned Japanese though they'd learned to speak Chinese quite fluently at one time.

In fact Anne attended the Ming Ming School founded by Chinese, including our landlords. So their children would get as good an education in Chinese as those children who attended Peking American schools did, but in English.

I was teaching Anne first-grade work in Kyoto by the Calvert School, because there wasn't a school for her to go to at that time. I found out from some missionaries in Kyoto that that was a good system, and I'd written for all the material, which came from Baltimore.

They sent books and notebooks and paper pads and pencils--the whole business that we needed. Here was I, never having taken any teaching courses and not really liking to teach, having to do it for my own child, which isn't the easiest thing to do!

Levenson: Jack Service's mother taught him from the Calvert Correspondence School as did many American service and mission people.

Bingham: It was excellent, because when Anne got back to Berkeley, she entered the third grade with no trouble at all at the Hillside School.

So my mornings were busy with that. In the afternoons, we'd go walking; we'd go shopping, and we'd have a great time together. By that time I'd learned a little bit of Japanese, so I could get around.

There was a young woman at the Daimaru store, the big department store, who spoke English very well, and she always helped me. Amano-san. I sent her cards and wrote to her for quite a while after we left Japan. Then years later when we went back, we had a reunion--she and my friend Mieko Kosugi, who lived only three blocks away from us at the edge of a Higashi temple. Her family had a nice house there. Mieko used to go on trips for temple fairs and temple dances, and things with us, as I said earlier.

Years later, 1965, we all had a reunion and I invited them for dinner up at the Miyako Hotel where we were at that time staying for a few days. And someone had a photographer come and take our picture. It was great fun.

Levenson: It must have been wonderful.

Bingham: Yes. During the war, I didn't correspond with Mieko because we couldn't send letters back and forth. Then after the war, we could just send postcards for a while. Finally I sent her a CARE package which included a can of tuna fish, and she wrote me back and thanked me so much for the wonderful tuna soup she'd been able to make. I've never tried making tuna soup.

Levenson: Why not?

Bingham: I suppose it would be all right.

But they were so grateful for anything like that which came. We've been good friends ever since.

We went to a number of wonderful temple affairs, ceremonies or celebrations, including Nara and Horyuji and other places.

Levenson: What sorts of temple affairs were these?

Bingham: Occasions to celebrate a memorable event or to mark some special holiday for the temple, and they have lots of extra sales people beside their little shops along the streets on the way who come and sell food, or toys for children, or things of that sort. It's just a very gay, exuberant time, and it was a good way to see a lot of Japanese people and how they lived. What they did and what they enjoyed doing.

Bingham: I think the things we enjoyed more were the temple dances that we went to. I took Anne to Horyuji one time and she was only about six years old at the time, I guess. On the train we met Bill Acker and his friend from the Fogg Museum. They had taken along a big heavy battery and a couple of headlights from automobiles because they wanted to see the wall paintings at Horyuji and photograph them. So I latched on and followed them around. We had a very interesting day. It was always very tiring because there was a lot of walking to do in those places.

Kyoto gets very cold in the winter and it snowed. The heating was just electric heaters in each room. We had American food thanks to that nice cook that we had.

Levenson: How did the children like Japan?

Bingham: Oh, I don't think they cared one way or the other. They had some good times there and some interesting times. I've never really asked them.

There was the man who'd come around about ten or eleven o'clock at night and call, "shina soba." He had a little cart that had bright lights on it, kerosene lamps. He sold this noodle soup, chicken soup with noodles in it, and he'd always gather a little crowd around him to buy chicken noodle soup in the middle of the night. That I thought was a very civilized kind of thing to do.

Levenson: Yes. Did you ever buy it from him?

Bingham: I never did, no. It smelled awfully good, too.

It was rather fun living in Kyoto because it's a beautiful city and we had time in between looking after the children to go and see temples. We didn't go outside Kyoto much that time. But there were temples all along the edge of the hills there.

On Kyushu, the summer we were at Unzen, we had seen in villages the culture of silkworms. Mieko took me one day to see the silk industry. We followed this through the factories where they unwound the cocoons, through to the weaving, and then to the dyeing and then to the tie dye, and finally to the kind of weaving that they did with their fingernails as beaters. There were a great many crafts connected with the beautiful silk cloth created in some half dozen places, each producing a special type of fabric or dyeing process.

And then you'd cross the river at Kyoto sometimes and see great streamers of yardage sweeping down with the current. The water there was very good for setting the dye. So that was a colorful scene. It's sometimes shown in the woodcut prints that you see of Kyoto.

Levenson: Did you feel any anti-American sentiment in the Japanese?

Bingham: Not at that time, no. When we traveled, later we did a certain amount. Just the offhanded way of being treated rather than with the usual courtesies that they always used to offer people.

I was told later that there was a policeman who'd come to the door and asked our maids what we were doing and so on. But we didn't hear about it at the time.

Our friends, the Glen Bruners, in Nagasaki who we've kept up with for many years, were the ones who told us a lot of this, years later. He had been with the Methodist mission first and then he was consul in Nagasaki. After the war, he was head of the commission that was investigating the bombing of Nagasaki and what had happened to people afterwards. So he was in close touch with the government.

There are several short trips that we took that I want to tell you about. One of them was to the Sho-so Inn from Kyoto when we were staying there with the children. In those days you had to put on your finest clothes and you had to get a permit from Tokyo.

Levenson: Where was the Sho-so Inn?

Bingham: It was at Nara, and it was a big log building. Very big--on stilts. It was planned so that when the wet weather came, the logs would swell and it would be completely sealed. They only opened it once a year in October in order that good weather and the dry logs with the cracks between would air the building inside a little bit.

Levenson: About how old was it?

Bingham: It dated back from, I think, practically from T'ang times, which would be what in Japan?

Levenson: I suppose about the eighth or ninth century.

Bingham: Yes, something like that.

The treasures in there included a whole small room full of armour and some lovely fabrics and rugs that were in a large glass case. They said that they moved those fabrics every year; put the bottom one on the top and then gradually all of them could be seen.

Then there was another room with various other kinds of treasures--lacquer and musical instruments, some of which were elaborately decorated, and paintings, because they must have had some of those there too. The thing I was particularly interested in was the fabrics. They were very unusual. There was one large multicolored piece that looked like nothing I'd ever seen before.

Bingham: It was a whole lot of colors put together, and not woven. Made with silk in the manner of felt.

We went from Kyoto to Nara by electric train, as I remember it. All dressed up. We must have been rather conspicuous to the Japanese. I think someone else went along with us that time. There were other scholars in Kyoto who we knew and have kept up with some of them since.

John Pilcher, an Englishman, who later became ambassador to Japan and who had a very fine career, was there, learning Japanese. And the Edwin Reischauers we saw quite often. Also Mignon and Bill Acker became close friends.

To continue with the Sho-so Inn, when we had seen only a part of the collection suddenly it began to rain, so the guards told us that we would have to leave and come back another day. Well, we were glad to have another chance to look because you can only take in so much at a time, and we felt we had a good look around but that we wanted to remember some of the articles there better. So we went back to Kyoto and made arrangements to go another day and had to get all dressed up again.

Levenson: Did you take the children?

Bingham: No, we didn't take the children. They were too young. They were only six and eight years old. [Interruption. Roofer]

Where was I?

Levenson: You said you made a second trip.

Bingham: Yes, we made a second trip.

Oh, I was telling you about the other people who were there. There was also Sam Newsom, who was specializing on Japanese gardens. He was measuring them. He had entree to many private gardens. He was interested in not only the garden plans but the plants that they used. Very interesting young man. When he returned to the United States, he lived in Mill Valley.

He had been in the nursery business in this country before going to Japan, but was attracted to go to Japan and make this study, and subsequently wrote a book about Japanese gardens.

We went to Sho-so Inn the second time and it was rewarding because as I say, it's always hard to remember so many things when you first see them. But to go back was wonderful.

Bingham: Then another trip that we took was up Hiei-zan, which was a sacred Buddhist mountain just outside of Kyoto. It was quite tall and it had a beautiful temple on the very top. The day we happened to go there with the Reischauers was a day when the imperial representative of the government was there for a visit. They had draped the main temple building with wide strips of satin--bright colors, golden yellow, red, blue and green. It was a very gala day.

Just as we arrived at the temple, some men came carrying a little black sedan--not a sedan chair, because the emperor's representative was seated cross legged inside--typical Japanese old-fashioned traveling vehicle. The man got out and he had on one of the old fashioned hats made out of--I guess it was black horse hair, with two little strips up the back; one curled forward and the other one straight up. And big, wooden, huge black lacquer shoes, which his servant, walking behind him, had to help him lift as he walked up the steps to the temple. The temple had very broad steps all the way around the front of it. He walked up the center of those. There was a small crowd of Japanese people watching him.

I guess he said some prayers inside. The priests, of course, were up at the top level to greet him. We had the two girls with us, Anne and Clare. So we stood off to the side and put them up on a wall, as I remember it, so they could see above the heads of the people.

Then we walked around and looked at the rest of the layout on the hill. There were other little temples along the top of this mountain and a beautiful big driveway and big cryptomeria trees, which are similar to our redwoods, but specially fine in Japan.

It was a very steep mountain. Nowadays they have a road that goes up, but in those days we didn't go by road. We probably took an electric train or a trolley car or a bus to the bottom of the mountain and then took a cable car up, so we had five views of the countryside as we rode up.

Another trip was because Mie Kosugi told us of a temple celebration at Nara at the full moon. We went by electric train, Woodbridge and I with I think the Reischauers. I was knitting on the train, which had long seats each side of the car so the passengers faced one another. I often did this because I made sweaters for Woodbridge and our daughters.

A Japanese woman sitting near me leaned across Mie who was beside me and asked to learn how I did this. Mie interpreted for us. She suddenly asked, "Are you a Christian?" I answered, "Yes," and then asked her, "Are you a Buddhist?" Then she wanted to talk more but that was difficult with the noise of the train and also being in such a public place.

Bingham: It was a cold night and the dances were held out of doors, so we were glad to return to our house and warm up. But what a rare and wonderful evening we had enjoyed! The costumes were dramatic and beautiful brocades.

Levenson: It sounds wonderful.

Bingham: It was. It was a memorable experience.

Levenson: How long were you in Japan altogether?

Bingham: We were in Japan eight months that time. We arrived in Kyoto the beginning of October and we left there in March. We had made other local trips to the Moss gardens and the Kinkakuji, the Ginkakuji, and other temples that were on the edge of town and had fine gardens, as well as seeing many of the temples in town. I look back on that year in Kyoto as a marvelous experience. Getting to know some of the nice missionaries who were there, such dedicated people, and so friendly. They had busy lives of their own, but yet they always gave time to do something with us occasionally. I remember going to one of the families for dinner on a Sunday night, and they served creamed chicken on crisp waffles. That was such a treat.

Levenson: It sounds like a terrible mixture!

Bingham: Oh, it was delicious. The waffles were nice and crisp, and you first put butter on them, then you put the creamed chicken on. It was like having it on toast, only it had even more flavor. They had included the girls. Their children were older than ours.

Kyoto in the fall of 1936 was really beautiful. There were so many of the maple trees that turned red and gold. The whole city was a very bustling city at that time. I used to go to the Maruzen department store to do shopping. Amano-san was my interpreter, and I kept up with her for quite a few years. She later went to live in Shikoku.

Arranged Marriages

Bingham: Amano-san came to me one evening in the house we had in Kyoto, and after we'd had dinner together, she took me aside and said, "What would you do? My family want me to marry this man, and I don't like him and I don't want to marry him. I'm sure there'll be somebody else that I would like to marry."

Bingham: So I said, "Well, it's very hard for me to tell you because I don't know anything except that in your culture you follow that pattern and eventually accept it and enjoy it, and in time hopefully, love the man that you marry." Because it seemed to me that there were many happy marriages that had been arranged in the Japanese way of doing things.

I said, "As a matter of fact, in our culture, we don't have arranged marriages but our parents do control a certain amount of who we go out with and who we see, and introduce us to their circle of friends so that our circle is rather limited. Therefore, they control it to that degree."

I've had to tell that to another girl or two in Japan. Because they see us making our own decision as to who we wish to marry, and they feel rather jealous because they've been told what to do at an age when they don't want to be told what to do.

So it's been a very interesting experience to have these conversations with young women who I became acquainted with.

Levenson: How did the marriages work out?

Bingham: That marriage worked out reasonably well. I can't tell you exactly because I never met her husband. She had to work terribly hard for her in-laws because they had an orange grove and they had to get labor to pick the oranges. If they couldn't get enough, then they had to do it themselves. From her letters I would say well at first but sadly when he had to retire from teaching to work on the orchard.

As the parents got older, more and more they had to do all the work because they didn't have the funds to employ a lot of people. So I think she found it exhausting. I have not heard from her for a number of years.

Going Home with the Clubbs

Levenson: This takes up to what, March 1937?

Bingham: March 1937. We had written to our friends, the Edmund Clubbs, in Peking, because they had told us when we left Peking that they'd be having home leave in the spring. So we thought maybe there'd be a chance of our going back together. They said yes, that they were taking such and such a ship of the Dollar Line, so we planned to go on the same ship.

Bingham: Their children, Oliver Edmund, Jr. and Zoe, were the same age as our children.

We had an amazing trip back. We got on the ship at Kobe and found them, and not long after that, we got to Yokohama. After Yokohama, out at sea, we were on the edge of a typhoon. Well, Marianne Clubb and I were just laid flat in our beds, we were so sick because of the bad weather. The children, of course, were running all over the place, and we couldn't have cared less, unfortunately.

One of the stewards told us, "You know what that little girl with the curly hair does?" That was Zoe Clubb. "She comes down to the dining room, she puts her fist hard on the table, and she says, 'I want grapefruit.' We give her some grapefruit and then she wants another and another."

I don't know what our children did, except years later, Clare told me that the deck steward had had to get after them because they were climbing on the railings, and he was afraid they would fall off into the ocean.

They had no trouble with seasickness. They were just too lively and kept out in the open air. But soon we adults recovered and were able to sit on deck and finally enjoy the trip more.

But when we got to Hawaii, Woodbridge found that there was a ship going to Los Angeles. I think the ship we were on was going to Seattle. My parents had come West to San Francisco to meet us. Father, at that time, also did business in San Francisco, so that was part of his reason for coming out.

We decided we'd better go to Los Angeles. So, at Honolulu we changed ship. That was quite a process because we had to be sure all our baggage got on with us. Of course we missed the Clubbs the rest of the journey, but this was a better way to arrange it. We reached San Pedro Harbor and got onto a one-car electric train to go into Los Angeles.

I can still remember my acute impression of the people as they walked along the streets. It was so much more of a rushed crowd than in Japan. The black people swung along so gracefully and in such a lithe way as though they didn't have a bone in their bodies. This was quite different from Japan where everybody was much more formal and rigid in their way.

We didn't have any trouble getting to the docks in Japan, but later some of our friends had a great deal of trouble on the train because there were already people very suspicious of Americans and

Bingham: they had police watching and being rough about examining baggage. Really these other friends had a very bad time. But that was later, in December 1938. We left in March, 1937.

Back Home in America

Bingham: Finally we got into Los Angeles and went to the Ambassador Hotel for the day and took a train late in the day to go to San Francisco. I can remember in the middle of the hotel lobby, there was a fish pond. Of course, two little girls aged about six and eight thought it was great sport to dabble their fingers in it. I was embarrassed. I thought they shouldn't do this, but they spent a happy time there.

Then we went up to San Francisco and my father and mother met us with a big car that they had hired. We drove across the Bay Bridge, which was just in the process of planning when we'd left the United States. They'd just put down some of the big piers by the time we'd left. So it was quite a thrill to drive across that for the first time to go to Berkeley.

Woodbridge and I were talking about our time in Berkeley. All we both can remember is that we were there a very short time, saw some of our friends of the History Department, and a few close friends in the community. That was about all we did.

We took the train East and went to Washington, D.C. where we stayed at the Lafayette Hotel, not far from the White House. Some cousins of mine, Selden and Mary Chapin, gave a party, but we didn't know it was in our honor. He was in the diplomatic service.

He had been the ambassador to Iran and before that, to Hungary. We were very casual about it because we had the children to look after. It was very hard to get a babysitter and they weren't babies after all; they were very active. So we arrived there very late and a lot of the people had left, unfortunately. I was terribly embarrassed, but I felt that it was too bad they hadn't let us know it was in our honor so that we could have been on time.

Levenson: Was there a great deal of interest in what you could tell people about the Far East?

Bingham: Oh yes, a lot, because not very many Americans had actually lived there at that time, at least among our family and friends. Selden and Mary knew Peking.

Levenson: I often had the experience when we traveled, of people saying, "Oh, you must tell us all about it." And they would let you speak for maybe five minutes and then they would come in and tell you about their travels, or whatever domestic catastrophies were on their mind. I found people were very rarely really interested in where we'd been!

Bingham: We've found that's true, too, with many of the trips we've taken. People want to hear all about it and they want to see your pictures. Well, the pictures they're always terribly interested in and they'll very quietly listen and watch. But when you get talking about the trip, then they begin saying, "Oh, you know, I've never been there and I've heard thus and such about it," or "I've been there. Did you go to such and such a place?" Or "Did you see so and so?" Then they go on about their trip.

But it doesn't bother me. After all, it's fun to hear about their trip too.

Levenson: At this rather high-level party that the Chapins gave for you, what was the level of information, the sorts of questions that people were asking you?

Bingham: I wish I had written it down. I don't remember. It was some time ago, back in 1937.

Levenson: Indeed, yes.

Bingham: Selden's mother was a wonderful person. She had undertaken after her children grew up, to bring up the daughter of some relatives of hers. The mother had died and the father was living in England. The daughter was later to marry the prince and then king of Sikkim. Hope Cooke.

I didn't meet her at that time. I met her later in Berkeley. Just by coincidence. We were invited to lunch in honor of Hope Cooke and the prince, her fiance, by the [Robert] Scalapinos. They were so surprised to find we knew anything about her.

Washington was always a thrilling place to go back to. Wood's father lived there. His mother was in Florida, because she always went down there in the winter. Her mother had a house there on Brickell Avenue, right at the edge of Biscayne Bay. We spent some time there, but some of it was very unhappy, because Wood's father and mother were just in the process of getting a divorce, and Woodbridge had to testify on her behalf. But we were able to go to the beach and swim and take the children to do some happy things of that sort.

Miami already had great big hotels along the waterfront near the center of town.

Levenson: What sort of testimony did he have to give?

Bingham: I don't remember. I didn't get involved in it. I was busy with those two young ladies.

Levenson: Yes, I can imagine.

Well, what were Woodbridge's career plans at this point?

Bingham: He hoped to come and teach, of course, in the history department.

Levenson: Back to Berkeley?

Bingham: When we left New England, he had hoped to be able to go to Yale or Harvard, but when he realized that his health wasn't able to take that climate, then we began focussing on California. Since he'd done some graduate work here, he thought perhaps he'd be able to find a position in California.

The thing that happened was that while we were in the East, I guess I don't know whether it was in Washington or later in New York, he received a letter from the university at Pullman, Washington, asking him to come there. He thought about it quite a bit. Then he thought maybe he'd better contact the people in Berkeley because he'd really rather come here. So that's what he did.

He also got an offer from Duke University, but the people in Berkeley were anxious that he come here because the man who was here in Far Eastern Studies was about to move somewhere else.

Levenson: What was that?

Bingham: I think his name was Baker. I can't remember exactly. I think he went to establish a department in a junior college in California. So we did come to Berkeley. [brief interruption: move to bedroom to avoid most of the noise of the roofers]

Levenson: So what did you do after your visit to Miami?

Bingham: We went up to New York and stayed all spring with my family. My mother employed a nice governess to take care of the children, so that I didn't have all that to do all the time. And she had a good big house with lots of space. It was the house I described early in my recording here. On Fifth Avenue near Seventieth Street.

Levenson: I remember. It must have been lovely for the girls.

Bingham: I could see the girls doing a few of the same things we did: roller skating in the park. Yes, I think they enjoyed it. They don't remember much about that part. They had so many other things to remember from the Far East.

Bingham: Although Anne had learned Chinese and gone to a Chinese school, she wouldn't say a word of it when she got home. I'd been warned by the missionary people who'd had this experience that it would happen. They get embarrassed; they don't want to be different from the other children. And they never did learn Japanese. That was one too much for them.

Levenson: So you were back in New York.

Bingham: And getting our feet on the ground again. Finally, we went up to Connecticut for the summer as we did so many times later. But that time we didn't keep the governess. We had a good summer there.

III JUNIOR FACULTY WIFE AND MOTHER AT BERKELEY: WORLD WAR II

Private Means in a University Environment

Bingham: Then in the fall we came out here to Berkeley. The train ride was very, very hot. There was no air conditioning. And those steel cars coming across Nevada and some of the very flat, hot country were unbearably hot. I can remember the children being very uncomfortable and very restless. We did have some games to play, books to read, but they crawled around on the floor of the train, getting filthy dirty. But we made it.

In Berkeley we stayed at Cloyne Court, which in those days was a residential hotel. My mother had heard of a Scotch girl, Ella Fairweather, who was a relative of one of the nice old employees of W&J Sloane. She wanted to do something in this country, like work taking care of children, so we employed her and took her along. Ella was a pretty, dark-haired, rosy-cheeked girl who had very good sense and was very helpful.

So she came along with us. Years later my mother insisted on my taking a nice old maid she'd had down in Charleston, South Carolina, Evelyn Smith. Evelyn Smith's father had run a cab business in Charleston. Her mother had a little antique store and she was quite well known there. Evelyn had worked for my mother and father in Charleston in the winter when they were there. She came out with us in 1937.

They put us in nice comfortable rooms. But we also had a little dog, Guess, with us because Mother had given him to us as a pet for the children. It kept them very happy of course.

They woke up at five o'clock in the morning and romped around in their room.

We came down to breakfast and one of the sisters, Miss Pierce, who ran Cloyne Court at that time came over to my table after we got seated and were eating breakfast and said, "Mrs. Bingham, I'd like to see you after breakfast." I thought, "Oh, my land, now what?"

Bingham: You know, at the end of a long trip and all the moves we'd had. I couldn't imagine more trouble in store.

So after breakfast I went into a little room and conferred with her. It seems that the lady below the children's room was a Mrs. Richardson, who came from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and was a pianist and used to stay there every summer to study music at the university and practice her piano, and she was not about to be waked up at five o'clock in the morning!

I'd seen my friend Margaret Hatfield the day before, and she said, "Oh, if only I could find a nice maid to help out." She had three children and she was tired. I called her up and I said, "Margaret, if I lend you my maid, would you be able to take care of my two children, and I'll put the dog at the vet's?" She said yes, that would be quite all right. So we moved them out for a few days. The children went to stay with John and Margaret Hatfield. The dog went to the vet's. It was a good arrangement. By that time, things had calmed down and Miss Pierce called me up and said that they had a room over the dining room which would be no trouble if we wanted to have the children there.

So back we went to Cloyne Court, over the dining room. Spacious apartment, quite separate from all the rest of the people. And I was relaxed because I knew that nobody would be bothered if they woke up early.

That was our first try here. And while Woodbridge got started at the university, I looked around for a house. We contacted Mr. Duhring who worked at Mason McDuffie Company and he referred us to a lady who handled their rentals. Nobody wanted a dog or children! We found 2340 Vine Street and here was a house with a sign in the window "Children Preferred." So we certainly moved into that as soon as we could get our furniture moved here from New London, Connecticut. Otis Marsten was a good landlord. It was a well-built house and it had a view of the bay, and a very small amount of space in the yard for the children to play.

It was fairly near Hillside School, so we stayed there until 1942, when we bought 27 Tamalpais Road, a handsome Mediterranean style house built by the Jacobs family. The architect was Mr. Walter Ratcliff. The girls could walk up to Hillside School and back. Next door came a family with children about the same ages as ours.

Levenson: One thing that occurred to me as I listened to last week's tape again, was that you mentioned having a maid or maids. It was a time when faculty salaries were very low, and you must have been perceived--with your and Woodbridge's private means--as being rich in a situation where most people were not. I'd like to hear what you thought about that.

Bingham: Yes, I'd be glad to tell you. We were very aware of this fact, partly because Wood's parents had been in the same position when they were at New Haven, because Mrs. Bingham's mother was wealthy and was able to build a beautiful house for them, which many faculty families, of course, couldn't afford. I had heard about Mrs. Bingham's difficulties in making friends. I was very conscious of this and wanted to make myself acceptable to the other faculty without being intrusive with the appearance of wealth.

We made a point of not being ostentatious in any way, and being generous about having people come to our house. Everybody was very friendly to us, I must say. I got to know some of the older faculty wives and that was helpful, because I could talk things over with them. They understood the situation well. They knew my mother and father who had come out to visit. We were anxious to establish friendships, help in the community, and of course, in the university.

My attitude was that if I did the volunteer work as I'd been taught at home, which was a thing that a person of wealth could well afford to do, that would help make friends, too.

After we got settled on Vine Street, we sent Anne and Clare to Hillside School. They made friends there, and through one of Anne's friends, I became friends with Mary Jensen, the mother, and she was in the same position as we were. With her I could ask a lot of questions that came up. She was very helpful. Eventually, she also had four daughters. When our fourth daughter came, our Anne said, "Ah, at last we're up with the Jensens!" because she'd always been conscious that they had four daughters.

Levenson: So you weren't keeping up with the Joneses, you were keeping up with the Jensens. [laughter]

Bingham: That's right. Mary was just a very good friend for many years. She would help me when the girls got older with knowing who was a good person for them to date, or who was a good family to get to know, and all this kind of thing, which when you're very new to a community is most helpful.

The Girls' Education: Views on Dating, Family Planning, Sex, and Religious Instruction

Levenson: What were your criteria for deciding that somebody was good for the girls to date?

Bingham: I just wanted them to be people of good character. And interesting.

Levenson: You talk about eventually having four children. What were your and Woodbridge's views on family planning?

Bingham: We thought it was quite important, especially during the years in China where it was difficult to have children and where the health risks were much higher than in this country.

Levenson: Perhaps this is a good time to talk about your practices and ideas on the sex education of your daughters.

Bingham: Well, I got some books about how to tell children about having babies and sex relations. When they'd ask questions, I would be able to answer them. I thought that was the best way to handle it, because in my family my mother had told me pitifully little about all of this. She told me about children but not anything else about sex education. We'd always had animals around, so we knew how they had their babies, and she made a point of that, that we should learn by seeing what the animals did.

Levenson: Do you think that's a good approach?

Bingham: Not entirely, no. I think it's inadequate. I think it's a good approach for little children certainly, because it's a very natural one. They observe what animals are doing and they ask questions accordingly. And it's only right that they should be answered honestly. I think that I didn't worry too much about it at that time.

But I also made a point of going to the Parent Teacher Association meetings, and at many of those, they had someone speak to us about children and family relationships. Among other things, of course, the sex education was part of it. So I learned and followed advice on how to educate our girls on this subject.

There was a very good woman who came to Hillside School; she was a member of our church also. She gave talks and she told you about the fact that in certain families--in many families--the position of the first child was very different from the second child and the third child. So I began to realize that there were things you had to observe and take note of beside just bringing them up as people.

Their position in the family made quite a difference in their reactions to things.

Levenson: What did you do about religious education and how well did it take with the girls?

Bingham: We always had gone to church. Even in Peking we would go occasionally; not every Sunday. There was a community church there with a Dr. Pike, who was a very fine man. He and his wife had been in Peking for some time and later lived in the Bay Area.

When we came to Berkeley, at first we didn't go to church. Woodbridge hadn't been too well, so he was home a great deal. But after we moved to Vine Street, we went to All Souls' Church and realized that their Sunday School was very, very small and we didn't think that it had very much to offer the girls.

We had read bible stories to the children but did not make a great point of it. At one point in China, we did try to have daily prayers because we ourselves felt the need to think about these things when we couldn't go to church. That was a challenge, too, because we'd never done it in our homes.

Levenson: Is All Souls' Episcopalian?

Bingham: Yes, All Souls' is Episcopalian. Woodbridge is an Episcopalian. He joined at Groton School. But I was brought up as a Presbyterian, as you know.

However, when I was up at Lenox as a small child, Mother used to take us to the Episcopal church there, because she had many friends there and the minister was a fine person that she admired.

Then as I say, when we came to Berkeley, we wanted to find a good Sunday School for the children, so we actually shopped around and asked people. We found that the Congregational church here, First Congregational on Dana and Channing Way, was a strong church. So we went there and then finally we became members there and sent the children to their Sunday School. We've been very satisfied with that. John and Margaret Hatfield and her mother, Mrs. Selden Smith, were loyal members and were our close friends by then.

They didn't object too much. One or two of them used to make a fuss about it, but we just made it very impersonal and said, "Well, this is just what we do and Sunday is the day for this," and didn't try to make an issue of it.

Levenson: Up to what age did they attend Sunday School?

Bingham: Oh, they went through high school. There was a wonderful junior high school group that Mr. and Mrs. Haymond led. They met during the week as well as going to Sunday School. I think that the girls enjoyed it very much. This way they met a lot of young people too.

Levenson: Have they remained Congregationalists?

Bingham: They vary. Clare married a Catholic, Edward Osgood Brown, M.D.; she used to go to the Catholic church with him. They took quite a responsible part in it for a short time. But after they were divorced and she was remarried, she didn't go to the Catholic church anymore. Her children were brought up as Catholics but she hasn't stayed with it, nor have her young people.

She and her second husband, James S. Junge, went to the Presbyterian church for a while in Boulder, Colorado.

Anne has not liked the Episcopal church. She went to a Presbyterian church in Tenaflly where she lived. Now she goes to the Congregational church up in Old Lyme. That was the church that all my father's family used to go to. It's the old New England type. They now have a very fine young minister. His wife is English, so they go to England when possible. She can see her family and he can go to places like Cambridge and study. He enjoys that. It's very much of a refresher for him. They're very fortunate to have that quality person as leader.

Levenson: And Evie is very active.

Bingham: And Evie's very active in the First Congregational Church of Berkeley. Woodbridge doesn't go much but I've been very faithful in attending most of the time until recently. But I do listen on the radio when I am unable to go to church. They have a radio program. I've been active in that church at certain points.

However, my main activity was being on the board of trustees at the Pacific School of Religion.

Public Schools Through Junior High, Then Boarding School in Ross;
A Family Pattern Repeated

Bingham: To get back to schools, we had the children at Hillside School and found that very good. But later on when they got to high school age, the older two girls went over to Willard [Junior High] because their friends were going there. Many of the friends that they made were children of friends of mine.

By the time Evie and Marian came along, their friends were all going down to Garfield School, what's now Martin Luther King School. That worked out very well because they could walk there. I'd go pick them up or we'd arrange a car pool, but they could walk down.

Bingham: To get to Willard School, the girls had had to take the street car and that was kind of fun for them, because in those days the street car would come up the hill and the seats would be one way and then to go down, they had to change the backs--push them in a different direction so that the people would be facing forward going down-hill.

Clare would rush out of the house to get there with Jennifer Wellington, our neighbor, so that they could be the ones to change the backs of the seats. That was one way of getting them to school on time!

Levenson: Then, I believe for high school, you sent them to private schools.

Bingham: Yes.

Levenson: Why was that?

Bingham: We thought that they would get a better education there and prepare them for college, because we wanted them to go to college. I hadn't been and I realized the things that I couldn't do as well as others who were college graduates.

So we sent them to the Katharine Branson School in Ross. We visited the school several times and met some of the faculty and thought highly of Miss Branson. Since we'd been to boarding schools ourselves, we realized the benefits that they could get from having to live with other girls. Not just study during the day with them but really live with them; do the athletics with the same ones that you studied with, and so on.

It proved to be a very good decision because they've all done well in college, and in general in life. Because she's out here, Evie has been very loyal to the school and has been on alumnae committees.

Levenson: Was going to a private school a controversial issue in those days, as it has become recently?

Bingham: I don't think in the same way at all. I think that more and more it was accepted. Out here, at first people thought you were rather snooty to be sending children away from the public schools which were good enough for their children. I had no criticism with the high school because I didn't really know much about it. But I just wanted to follow the pattern that we'd had because we felt it was such a good pattern. That was mostly the reason that we did it, I think.

We were fortunate to be able to afford it too.

Levenson: It was nice that you sent them locally in California instead to one of the eastern schools.

Bingham: I would love to have sent them to Foxcroft in Virginia where I went because that was such a good experience in a different pattern of life down there. But it was too far away and we didn't want to add the cost of the big trip back and forth to the tuition fees. And also we liked to keep in touch with them closely at that age. So it really was a very nice arrangement, as far as we could see.

Town and Gown Club Communities in Berkeley in the Thirties

Levenson: Now here you are, a junior faculty wife with two daughters. Do you have any comments on Berkeley and the university at that time before World War II?

Bingham: I think Berkeley was a very fine community. It was much smaller then and you knew people more. I always remember the first landlady we had when we lived out on Capistrano Avenue. She took me downtown one day to introduce me to the grocer and the butcher and tell me what shops to use. I don't know why she took it unto herself to do that, but she was very kind about it.

She said, "You know, we talk to our grocer out here." Well, I thought that was kind of a funny remark because I'd always talked to our grocer in the East! But I think she thought of an easterner as being formal and not associating with people who were tradespeople.

Levenson: Let's see, we haven't had the birth of the two younger children.

Bingham: Oh, yes. Well, Evie was born at Peralta Hospital, April 26, 1937. Marian was born there also, July 5, 1940.

As far as the community was concerned, as I say, I wanted to do something to get to know people and to do my share. So I went down to the Berkeley Clinic on University Avenue and Sixth Street and offered to help as a volunteer. They were quite surprised that I did this because I don't think many people just walked in the door and offered to be volunteers.

Miss Spear, who was head of the social welfare department, said she'd be delighted if I would help file the charts after the social welfare ladies had processed the families they had interviewed. So I did that for some time. By then, word of my doing this had gotten to some of my friends and they invited me to be a member of the auxiliary for that clinic, which met once a month. We pasted strips in charts so that the social welfare people didn't have to do it themselves. That helped them to put the papers in good order in the files that they used.

Levenson: Who were the clients of this clinic?

Bingham: Oh, they were very poor people. Many of them were Spanish-Americans who lived down in the West Berkeley area. I didn't meet them of course because all I did was take the charts from the interview room to the front room where the files were.

Levenson: Was this a medical clinic?

Bingham: Yes, it was a medical clinic. Doctors gave their services to take care of the people certain days a week, certain hours. Even some of the doctors who were looking after us helped there. There were eye doctors and specialists as well as general physicians. I guess they must have had some psychiatric help too. But I didn't know who the people in that field were.

Through this, I got to know a whole other group of ladies, and after that I was invited to be on the Visiting Nurse Association board, which I served on for a short term. That was quite interesting; I learned what they did in the community.

I must tell you also at the same time that Ruth Duhring, whose husband had met us at the train when we came, gave two luncheons for me and introduced me to some of her friends. Though them also, I met other people.

In those days the patterns was that if you were asked to a luncheon for somebody, you in turn gave them a little lunch or a tea or something. I thought it was a most outgoing and friendly community.

I also had joined the St. Moritz Club which met at the Berkeley Ice Rink and skated once a week when it was the time for ladies. Bernice Brode often took me. We tried to share rides. Skating was good exercise and relaxation with friends. The girls later were members and skated on Saturdays.

Then, when Wood became an instructor in 1937, there were faculty section clubs which I was eligible to join. I joined the French section for the French-speaking people. We used to give little plays for one another. We had great fun reading French and talking French, and it kept my French up which I'd had all my life. I also joined the SOS section which made garments for students at Cowell Hospital.

But it was all these different things, you see, that made life so rich and interesting here in Berkeley.

Levenson: What about the history department, which of course was so much smaller then?

Bingham: The history department was great. Professor and Mrs. Morris were an older man and lady who invited us to their house for dinner quite soon after we'd come. And Professor and Mrs. McCormac with whom Woodbridge had studied, asked us to their house. We met some very interesting people there.

Mrs. McCormac was rather a formal lady compared to most of the ladies here. But she always gave a lovely dinner.

Levenson: Were there other junior faculty? I know when we came in 1951, it seemed to be a very senior department. In fact, there were only two other assistant professors.

Bingham: You know, I don't remember who else was very young in the department in those days. Perhaps George and Eleanor Guttridge, who became close friends.

We got to know the older people quite easily because we were so used to going out with--at least I was--meeting my family's friends, and it didn't seem something different or strange.

Later on, we used to see a good deal of the graduate students with whom Woodbridge was working. But that was several years later.

Levenson: How much were you at this point aware of the onset of war, both in Europe and then subsequently in 1941, the United States involvement after Pearl Harbor?

Bingham: When we were in the Far East, things were quite tense in Peking for instance, as I think I've described. In Japan, we didn't sense it as much as we had in Peking. But there wasn't a really friendly feeling towards Americans that there might have been and that we had later on after the war.

In Europe, the only way I realized much about it was reading thought the papers. Tensions that were building up. But I think Pearl Harbor was a tremendous shock to all of us. We had absolutely no idea that anything like that would happen.

And the invasion of Holland and so on was very drastic, too. By that time I had a young woman working for us, Ada DeBruyn who was of Dutch origin. She was just terribly upset about the events in Europe, of course, as her family were involved.

A Last Big Trip Before the War: Cross Country with a Trailer

Bingham: In 1941, we took a trip with the trailer across country with the girls. We had a feeling we might not be able to travel easily if there was going to be a war, which looked very imminent in 1941. So we bought a trailer in San Francisco and outfitted it with as light weight things as we could. For instance, I got stainless steel pans at the ten-cent store because they were lighter weight than some others that we could have bought.

We had a nice little refrigerator. The trailer could sleep four people, or six people, but we took sleeping bags also because some of the time, two had to sleep on the floor. There were the four children and Woodbridge and I, and the Dutch girl, Ada de Bruyn, whom I mentioned before who was helping us with bringing up the children.

We started off from Berkeley and went up to near Donner Pass the first night. There was snow on the ground up there. It was very cold. But we had a little butane heater and we were able to keep warm enough. I made jello next morning and put it on a snow drift to solidify.

We went on across Nevada and had a picnic lunch. I can remember sitting out on the desert sand in Nevada on our way to Salt Lake City. There were little tiny scorpions, just the color of the sand, so we had to be careful not to touch them. When we were through our picnic, Woodbridge dug a hole in the sand; we put some of the papers and stuff that we'd accumulated in the way of trash into the hole and covered it all up. But he left a shovel there, unfortunately, so the rest of the trip we were not able to do that again.

We went across country--Marian was only ten months old. She was a tiny little girl. We went to Salt Lake City, and it was a beautiful view of the city as we came in, around past these big mountains. I enjoyed Nevada too; the scenes there were tremendous. Very big mountains and wide expanses of valleys. And of course, good cloud effects. The desert was very hot and I don't think it was on this trip, but another trip we had a little lizard the children had taken along as a friend. The poor little thing just literally dried up. We put drinking water in the little box where we had him, but that didn't help him enough. So we had to have a little burial of the lizard.

Levenson: Was it unusual in 1941 for a family that could afford to go by train or stay in hotels, to take that sort of camping trip?

Bingham: Yes. I don't remember other people whom we knew who were doing it. There were other trailers on the road, but there were none of these house campers that are on trucks, in those days. That was a later development. Cars pulling trailers was the thing in those days. This was not a very big trailer compared to some of them, but it was quite tricky to drive, especially if you had to back up. But we got along, Woodbridge and I taking turns all the way.

I don't remember that we stayed in a real trailer camp. We used to go to motels that would accept trailers. Once or twice, we took a motel room so we could spread out, you know, because it got sort of cramped.

We got further East and of course it started raining some days. One day there was quite a flood rain, so we stopped at a bridge to watch the roaring water go under the bridge. I just wore a pant suit most of the time, and that was something different for me. I stood there and the trailer pulled off without me and so I didn't know what I was going to do. I had no purse; no anything, except what I was wearing.

But one of the children realized that I was left back there. So they stopped the trailer and I caught up with them. [laughter]

Often I would take one of the children and let them sleep in the trailer after lunch because it made the station wagon less crowded. We drove a Chevrolet station wagon and had a trailer hitch put on it.

Then we went on further and it was awfully hard to keep up with the laundry that we had to do. Most of the trailer camps had laundry facilities but some of them didn't. I can remember a few days toward the end of the trip where we had diapers hanging inside the trailer to dry. It was really untidy looking. Marian was still a baby.

Levenson: How many days did it take you? Of course that was before the big freeway system was put in.

Bingham: I think it took about two weeks actually, because we didn't drive terribly far every day, and we couldn't go fast. But I got the meals with Ada and we had some canned goods. Occasionally we'd stop and buy fresh things.

One time, I guess it must have been Marian's birthday, we stopped to buy a cake and the bakery was just filthy, and it had many flies. So we ended up throwing that cake away, and then we found another one that was nice and clean. The children were horrified to think of throwing a whole cake away, but I didn't think it was right to eat it.

Bingham: We went via Pittsburgh and parked in Pittsburgh on a side street and started to have our lunch. All of a sudden, it was twelve o'clock, there was a big bell that rang and all the children let out of school. They were so fascinated with seeing this trailer that there were little people looking in and trying to come in and look around. We finally got them to go out and leave us alone and we finished our lunch. Then we got on a street that took us up to a graveyard, a cemetery. We got into that cemetery and of course the roads were very narrow and we couldn't back up to get out, so we had to drive all the way through and around it. It was a beautiful place, fortunately; we enjoyed that part.

Then on we went. We got to Connecticut and it was quite a sight and quite a topic of conversation; our family having come East in a trailer. So I had to have a couple of parties up in Salem where we went, where my husband's family lived. I had a couple of tea parties so that they could come and look at the trailer. Well, it was quite fun.

But it was a hard trip and Woodbridge got bronchitis shortly after that, so it ended up that we took the trailer up to Hartford and were able to sell it for exactly what we paid for it. We felt very lucky.

We took our station wagon when it was time to come home, down to the station in New London where we were going to board the train. It was to go on a freight car, and we filled it full of our camping stuff and everything else that we thought we should bring back. The man at the freight station said, "You know, we're not responsible for what's in the wagon. You may have some things disappear, but we'll take it that way." So we took our chances. But everything was intact when we got it back to Berkeley. It was quite an experience.

There was no trouble selling the trailer because in those days, just as the war was about to begin, we were already revving up our airplane factories and there's a big one, the Pratt Whitney factory, outside of Hartford, which made airplane engines, so that they had need for housing in trailers for the people working there. And Hartford was only forty-five miles from Salem, where we were, so it was very simple to take it up there and sell it.

Levenson: Did you do much more camping later?

Bingham: Oh no, we didn't. Most of our friends went up in the Sierras, but we always went back to Connecticut to keep up our ties with our families. Sometimes I'm sorry we didn't do more camping in the Sierras. But I think we weren't used to camping, Woodbridge and I, and we did feel very strongly that we needed to stay near our families. Our parents were getting older, and we were very close as families anyway.

Bingham: I think the girls have benefited by their having seen their families and their cousins all these years, and we've been able to keep a close family since then, too, which has been nice.

Levenson: And fairly unusual in America where people scatter so much.

Bingham: Yes, they do scatter around. Mostly it's because the industries or the businesses they're with send them to different places, and they have to take their families along. I think that's one of the disrupting factors in our life in America right now. Because so often the men don't mind going, but it's the women who have a hard time because they have to make new friends and adjust to different communities and ways of life. The children must change schools, break friendships and must make new friends.

Navy Japanese Language School in Berkeley and Boulder, Colorado

Levenson: After Pearl Harbor, what was Woodbridge's situation in terms of war service?

Bingham: We had become acquainted with Miss Florence Walne who came here to teach in the Department of Oriental Languages. She was asked to assume the responsibility for the Navy group that was being organized to learn Japanese. After the war, she married Samuel Farquhar. Some of the professors here were involved in that as teachers. So Woodbridge was asked if he would be willing to think about offering his services.

He asked Professor Paxson among others, and Colonel Moulthrop who was an old friend of Wood's father's, about his position and should he enlist or what should he do? They both recommended that he really become active in it since he was interested in the Far East.

So he signed up with Florence Walne to join the Navy Language School and he started studying here. But then as soon as the Japanese were moved away from the coast by military orders [Exec Order 9066], the navy had to make different plans, and the whole school was moved up to Boulder, Colorado, because many of the instructors were Japanese.

We rented our house which we'd just bought on Tamalpais Road, to some friends, Dr. and Mrs. Cushman McGiffert, who'd just come to Berkeley. He had been appointed the president of the Pacific School of Religion. So in the autumn we moved to Boulder, another university community. [1942]

Levenson: My husband was in the same class, navy class.

Bingham: Oh, was he? So you were in Boulder too?

Levenson: No, I was still at school in England!

Bingham: It was quite a change for Woodbridge, of course. He had to be a student again, which was very difficult. And the other thing was that they had athletics every day, and he was not really up to taking that strenuous exercise. But he followed along and did the best he could.

Then in February he was assigned to go to Hawaii. [1943] Of course we didn't know for how long or anything. We had some very good friends in Boulder already. Marie and Jim Allan. Jim was in the history department at Boulder and he and Woodbridge had studied with Professor Robert Kerner here at Berkeley. They lived only about four blocks from where we rented the house on Vine Street.

Bingham: In Boulder we had a very nice house belonging to Dr. and Mrs. Cobb, up on the edge of the mountains, so we had a view across the plains. It always seemed as though you could see very many miles east. We'd get up for an early breakfast and watch the sun rise.

Next door neighbors to us was the [Navy] captain and his wife. I'll never forget the day when she called me up and said, "Will you come to dinner on Wednesday night?" I said, "No, I'm sorry, we can not because Woodbridge has to study during the week." "But," she said, "that's captain's orders!" So we had to go.

We went and she'd invited some other young people from the Navy Language School. They started to play poker after dinner. I knew nothing about poker. Then they began playing for stakes. I was very embarrassed because I didn't play a good game; didn't catch on well.

In poker you can play different kinds of hands, and they kept changing the rules each time, and that made it even more difficult.

It was rather fun to live there in Boulder. The climate was interesting. In September we had a snowfall with green leaves still on the trees. But the wind came and blew all the snow away and dried it up. It was a very dry climate.

Then later on, when the snow came, it was very heavy on the ground, a foot or two at a time. Our little cocker spaniel, Happy, the dog that Mother had given us after Guess died, went hopping like a grasshopper into the drifts when we'd let him out.

We think back to the Boulder days as really quite wonderful, because it was a whole new experience for our family. The children enjoyed the school there. They went by bus down to the elementary school, Anne and Clare did. And the two little girls played around at the house.

We had that wonderful Ada [de Bruyn], the Dutch person I spoke of just a few minutes ago. She looked after them a good part of the time. Then of course when the snow came and we could go sledding, I bought a sled and we were able to go down the hill where our house was located. Our house was near the meeting grounds on a hillside, so we could slide down empty streets, after heavy snows, to the beginning of the plain to the east at the edge of town. It was so beautiful there. We were always admiring the mountains and the view of the plains; the change of the weather; the lovely wide sky.

I joined a group of navy women. We met once a week, and occasionally we'd have one of the navy men talk to us. That was very interesting because none of us had had any indoctrination into navy life, so we were thankful to be told a little bit about what our position was and how our men would be treated.

Levenson: What do you remember that was important to you?

Bingham: I remember the time that the captain talked to us. He said that one of the things that was hard for a captain was that he was the only man on the ship who couldn't talk to anybody else, or get advice from anybody else. So really he was very lonely and he wanted us to remember that, because there were certain things that we were not to talk about and that we should be careful. He went through a whole list of things we were not to talk about--anything to do with personnel coming or going, or the ships that we knew were in port or out of port, even not to tell that we were connected with the language school, just that our husbands were students. He was good about indoctrinating us in the courtesies that were observed in the navy.

Also this same group I think were the ones who used to take Red Cross supplies and fold bandages occasionally. I don't remember how that tied in, but I know many of the women in the Navy Language School group did join that Red Cross group. That was another way we made friends there. I don't think I've kept up with any of them since then. It didn't get to be a really tight, close group.

We would have some of the students up for breakfast on Sunday morning because we found that they didn't have much breakfast offered them where they were living. Not all of them were married. It was kind of fun to entertain other students from many parts of our country.

One of my cousins from the East Coast joined the group, and so we invited him one time, I remember. We'd have three or four of them each Sunday for Breakfast.

Then in February, after the language school, Woodbridge's course ended. We came back to Berkeley and I stayed here with the children, and Woodbridge sailed off to Hawaii. I can remember going over to San Francisco with my brother-in-law one time. He came to visit. We went to Telegraph Hill and he got talking about well, which ship would Woodbridge be going on. I said, "We're not to talk about that, Bruce."

Levenson: You were well indoctrinated.

Bingham: Anytime we were in public places and such a question came up, either I didn't know or we didn't talk about it. I found that not knowing was a great boon, because my friends would often ask me, "How is Woodbridge and where is he?" I'd say I didn't know, which was a complete lie, of course, because I knew where he was, but they told us not to talk about it.

Bingham: Woodbridge would call me up occasionally. The telephone would ring, and the operator would make a date for such and such a time on such and such a day when he would call me. Often it was the same operator. She, too, would list the forbidden topics of conversation. Finally one day she said, "Well, Mrs. Bingham, I think you know what I was going to tell you, don't you?"

Levenson: Where did Woodbridge serve after Hawaii?

Bingham: He was there the whole time, about two years.

Levenson: That must have been a relief to you, that he didn't go over into the Pacific.

Bingham: One time he asked to go. It was during the summer I was with my family in Connecticut. I didn't get letters for a long time and this worried me. He had asked to have the experience of going with some of the troops. They went out to Guam. I don't remember what the title was, but he was in charge of some of the troops. He had to lay down the law to a few of them who misbehaved on board.

They had quite an experience, but he'd have to tell you about that.

He was only gone for less than a month. Then finally, when he came back, he couldn't write about it either. He just said he'd been away for a while.

Levenson: When was he discharged from the navy?

Bingham: He was discharged in October, 1944.

Berkeley and Wartime Train Journeys

Bingham: It was a tense time. I had to go East one summer because my mother hadn't been feeling well, and took the children. It was very hard to get train tickets in wartime, but the ticket agent at the Southern Pacific office I'd known for some time, because I used to go down and do that errand when we had gone East before the war. He said, "Well, I think under the circumstances, we can find you a place." So he did. He put us on a train and we went.

One time they took a car off, and so they doubled up the rest of the people. We had one section, which meant that one of the girls and I had to sleep together and two of the others were together, which was not very comfortable.

Levenson: But you were fortunate to get a sleeper, weren't you?

Bingham: Oh yes, definitely.

Then later on during the war I had to go East because my mother was very, very ill then. I had to get to Charleston, South Carolina, which was difficult. You went to Chicago and then you changed trains and went down South. I got there all right, but on the train from Chicago down, I had to sit up all day in one of these sections where you had two people on a seat facing two other people. They were very uncomfortable old-fashioned cars, and the people weren't very interesting.

But it was good experience. There was no diner. They came through the car and said they were going to stop at a certain station and there would be box lunches for us, but they had to know who'd want boxed lunches. I said I'd like one. Well, it turned out that the southern women in this place where we had to stop, put together a nice boxed lunch of their own cooking. It was marvelous southern fried chicken and some potato salad and fruit. I thought what a wonderful thing for these women to have done!

Well, along the way, even across country, they were having sandwich stands at the stations so that the military personnel who were being moved could find food when they needed it, in case they didn't have diners on the cars. This was another volunteer service that women in this country did during the war. We didn't hear much about it and they didn't get much credit for it, but it was a tremendously good service.

Levenson: Wonderful.

Bingham: Then on the way back, I got back to Chicago all right, but I had a big suitcase and a small overnight case. The porter that I got let me sit in the waiting room and said he'd come back for me when my train was due to be loaded. I waited and waited, and I heard the train called for the military, because they were always called first and got on first. Then there was no call for civilians.

I thought what is happening? So I called to a porter and I said, "What about this?" He said, "Oh, the train's just left." So I thought, my land, with all the difficulty there is in getting a place on a train, what am I going to do? He said, "That's all right, lady, I'll take you downstairs. I know one of the ticket agents." And he took me to a certain one downstairs. Actually what this agent did was suggest that I go to another station, to another railroad and get a train that would get me to Omaha sooner than the one that was going out from that station.

Bingham: So I went over to another station, the Burlington, and got the train, and later in the day of course picked up my train at Omaha, with its sleeper reservations. So that was a very lucky thing, but it gave me a terrible start at the time.

But the things I remember about those years were the rations that we had to have, and the ration books. And standing in line sometimes to get things. But fortunately I'd made good friends with both the butcher and the grocery store owners where I traded, and they were very good about sometimes letting me get butter and things that you weren't supposed to. I always had my ration tickets, however. But to know that you could get it, even though you had to stand in line, was a great help sometimes.

I don't remember too much about the difference in Berkeley during wartime. I guess I just sort of took it for granted everybody was having the same problem. Something that made me stop and think, though, was one Halloween we had a friend who we'd made in Kyoto years before, an Englishman, who came through. He was in the diplomatic service for England, and he was going to Mexico. On his way he stopped through Berkeley and saw us, and invited him for dinner.

Of course, Halloween in those days was really hectic, because there was all this trick or treat. The doorbell rang constantly. While I was getting supper, I'd open the cupboard and here was a dozen eggs. He'd say, "Oh, you get a dozen at a time?" I suddenly realized poor England, they were getting one a week or something.

Then we'd open another cupboard and there'd be potatoes in a sack. I'd peel a potato and start to cook it and he'd say, "Oh, we cook ours with the peels on," because they go further and they're more nourishing.

Well, I began to feel very self-conscious about our luck over here. That made me realize that things weren't as bad here as they were there. I'd realized that before, of course, with all the articles we'd read about England, the bombing and the situations there.

One of my brothers-in-law had been in England in the army. He was in training to go into occupied Germany. I don't think we knew at the time that it would be occupied Germany, but he was there with his group of military officers.

The university itself, as I remember, kept the pattern of life going pretty smoothly in Berkeley. There were the older professors there, of course, who could continue teaching their courses. As far as the women went, it seemed to me the section groups continued, and the friendships continued. Of course, many of us were doing some kind of thing on the side.

Bingham: I had Girl Scout troops. I decided that was the best thing I could do, as long as I was having to take care of a family. I could offer my services as a Girl Scout leader, picking up some of the things that I'd learned in Peking and continuing. So I did that for four years.

Some of it was quite a trial because some of the girls were very difficult to handle, and we were not allowed to dismiss them from the troop. You had to keep them in the troop. One time I had my daughter in the troop with some girls who were her classmates in school, and they raised hell. It was just an awful experience, but I couldn't do anything about it. The mothers were working, earning money for the family to keep going. So I couldn't talk to them much of the time because they'd be out all day and tired in the evening.

I couldn't send the children home, which I would like to have done occasionally, to just show them that they were not acceptable in the manner they were behaving. We got through the year anyway. I did one more year of that, but then I ended it because I was just fed up with the fact that the organization and no way of backing up the leaders when it came to difficulties like that.

Levenson: That doesn't sound good at all. It doesn't sound like the way it's done in England where there's very strict discipline.

Bingham: I suppose I should have found some way of dealing with it better than I did.

Levenson: Sometimes it's very hard.

Bingham: Sometimes you need an outside authority to lay down some laws. But I was glad I did it because I learned a lot about the other girls too.

Then when Woodbridge came back, we went down for two weeks to Del Monte and had a vacation. The trouble was that we ran into an October not like this one when it's such beautiful weather, but it rained and then the fogs came in. Woodbridge went and got bronchitis, so that was awful. So we had to come home sooner than we expected.

Left to right, William E.S. Griswold, Jr.,
Evelyn Griswold Mayer, John Sloane Griswold,
Adela Griswold Bartholomew, Dwight Griswold,
Ursula, Griswold parents seated and Suki,
mid-1940's



IV FACULTY AND FAMILY LIFE, TRAVEL, AND VOLUNTEER WORK

Town and Gown Club

Bingham: Quite early, in 1933, I was asked to be a member of the Town and Gown Club. It was quite unusual to ask anyone who was not a full professor's wife or who did not have some further connection with this community, and I was new in the community. It's an organization for ladies, about half of whom are university connected, and the other half are connected with the towns here, Berkeley or Oakland or San Francisco.

It is a social club, although they have very good lectures once every two weeks. There also is a book section at which a member reviews a book. Afterwards, those members who signed up to attend have lunch together. At the time I became a member, there was a wonderful current events section, led by Mrs. Nathaniel Gardner. She kept very well informed of current events. Her father had been a professor at Stanford University, I believe, in political science or history, so that she had a very rich background for this responsibility.

I used to do all my mending at those times, as many others of us did too. I could go and sit there and bring my little sack of sewing and listen to these very fine talks. And that helped decrease the mending and increase my knowledge!

Eventually I was asked if I would be on the board of directors, and I enjoyed doing that. We met on the Mondays when there was not a lecture. It was a group of about a dozen women who ran the club. I was the secretary for a couple of years; then I was asked to be the president for a year in 1946. It was quite a responsibility and I was scared to death because I had to stand up in front and introduce the chairman of the day and the speaker and say a few words besides.

Bingham: The one time I remember giving a talk was after we'd come back across the country, motoring with the girls, and I'd been so impressed with the different kinds of barns which were in different regions of our country. In the East they had big barns because they had to store the hay safely out of the bad weather. They also had to include the animals and the machinery for the farm.

Then you came further West and it was just for the machinery or the animals, rather than the hay also. Then the California barns again were still different. So I gave a little talk about the differences in our country and how interesting it was.

The president always had to put people at their ease with a short commentary before introducing the chairman of the day.

You asked me also about volunteer activities. Well, that's practically a whole other chapter.

A Faculty Wife's Life

Levenson: Did you enjoy being a faculty wife?

Bingham: Oh, yes. When we came back to Berkeley after our years in the Orient, when Woodbridge was asked to be an instructor, we were delighted and happy to become acquainted with the faculty. We didn't have much difficulty because the history department people were very kind to us; the older faculty invited us to their homes. Professor and Mrs. William Morris, Professor and Mrs. Frederic L. Paxson, and Professor and Mrs. James Westfall Thompson. The children called Mrs. Thompson their "Grandmother of the West." We got to know her very well and she was most kind to us all. The Thompsons lived on Hawthorne Terrace, two blocks away from the house we had rented on the corner of Vine and Scenic streets. For many years, they had a fine Chinese servant named Wong. George and Eleanor Guttridge became close friends of ours.

Woodbridge studied with Professors McCormac, Schafer, and Kerner. Dr. Herbert Bolton was chairman of the department. Others in the department at that time were Professors Palm, Van Nostrand, Priestly, and Chapman. We knew the Lawrence Harpers and Boltons. Professor Chitose Yanara came at about the same time as we did. The Thompsons came a year or two later, and Woodbridge helped bring Delmer Brown to this university. Delmer taught Japanese history. Woodbridge was Professor Paxson's teaching assistant for a year. Their department desks were in the basement southwest corner of Doe Library until Dwinelle Hall was built.

Bingham: When we invited our university friends to our house, we always tried to have some of our community friends as well, because we'd found it so interesting when we went to the McDuffies' house, for instance, to have mixed groups, not just university people only, or community people only, but to have them both together. We've made that a policy throughout the years. The McDuffies had musicals at their house one year on Sunday afternoons. What a joy to meet their fine friends; to listen to music with views of their beautiful garden seen through tall doorways, and through these nice friends we met many others, of course, both in Berkeley and in San Francisco.

Eventually Mrs. [Robert Gordon] Sproul,* wife of the president of the university, asked me to help with the college teas. The college teas were quite an institution in those days. They had originated to enable faculty wives to make friends and to encourage interdepartmental social life. So that women from different departments and different age groups could get to know each other.

The agriculture department had their own teas, but I don't think many other departments did at that time.

The college teas were held at the Women's Faculty Club. Mrs. Sproul eventually asked me to be on the committee that planned the teas. First I was assistant secretary, then secretary. Alison [Mrs. John B.] Saunders served at the same time as assistant treasurer, then treasurer. We became very good friends even before Dr. Saunders became dean of the University of California Medical School in San Francisco. Jean Vaux took my place after I finished being secretary. I think we each served two or three years. We met with Mrs. Sproul and we'd have to decide on the dates when the teas were going to be given and what refreshments were to be served. But Ida Sproul was such a wonderful planner, and a delightful person with whom to work.

Levenson: I remember as a very junior faculty wife, I was always hungry, and I used to look forward to the college teas party because the food was so good!

Bingham: I think some people practically made supper out of the little sandwiches and cakes.

*Ida Amelia Sproul, The President's Wife, an oral history interview conducted 1980-1981, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.

Bingham: There was a committee to receive the ladies as they arrived, another committee member to accompany each lady, and introduce her to Ida Sproul and the other dignitaries in the receiving line. Then guests were handed over to the dining room committee.

There were small tables around the edge of the large serving table in the dining room of the Women's Faculty Club. The senior ladies of the faculty would be the ones who were invited to pour the tea and coffee. Then the younger members, especially the very new ones, were invited to be hostesses who served people at the tables. I became acquainted with ladies in many different departments and enjoyed those events very much. I was very sorry when they had to discontinue them because it became too complicated and expensive. Also the young mothers couldn't leave their children so easily because it was expensive and difficult to get baby sitters and women didn't have help in their homes. So the college teas were combined with the Section Club and had a tea in the fall at University House and a business meeting in the spring. Or a morning coffee now, I believe.

Anyway, those were delightful days. We had a good time working together, and I think this was a pleasant way to get to know people when you were a newcomer.

Levenson: Did you entertain students much?

Bingham: Yes, we used to have Woodbridge's graduate students for buffet suppers. I'd put card tables in the living room and they would serve themselves in the dining room. We would have anywhere from twelve to sixteen, or even twenty once. Some of them we've been able to keep up with for years. And they found it nice to get to know each other out of the classroom as well as to know us and to be in our home.

I remember one student coming to me once and saying, "Oh, I'm so glad you have us over because this way we get really to know the professor instead of just seeing him on the stand in the classroom.

And we exchanged recipes sometimes, too.

Then you asked me about the Loyalty Oath. Well, that happened the year that we were in New York City on sabbatical, so we were really very much out of it and had to catch up when we got back, only to find that some our friends were not speaking to one another because of the controversy over the oath. Professor George Stewart write a book about that year. He and his wife, Ted, were friends of ours.

Levenson: The Loyalty Oath was imposed by the state on many people, including professors.

Bingham: Yes. And we felt that really it was a very unwise thing to have done because it would be too easy for anyone just to sign this oath and disregard it; and it made such terrible divisiveness inside the university family.

The McCarthy era I was not really as conscious of then as I was later, because we did know some of the people who were criticized like Owen Lattimore and Jack Service, but it was a long time later that we really felt the impact of that Loyalty Oath controversy. We weren't involved in the details of it, but we felt very sorry for our friends who were.

Levenson: I'm a little bit surprised because the McCarthy era had such an effect on the profession of Chinese studies, that the divisions didn't have more impact on you. People like Wittfogel, for instance.

Bingham: Oh yes. But he wasn't here at this university, was he?

Levenson: No.

Bingham: But I think that the Oriental department here wasn't that much affected, was it? I don't remember arguments about it.

Levenson: Perhaps not.

Did you know Jack Service then before he came to Berkeley in the 1960s?

Bingham: We met Jack Service* and his brother in Peking at a dinner one time. We didn't really know him very well, but I got to know him very well much later, and Caroline+ too. However, the Lattimores, Owen and Eleanor, were good friends of ours.

*John S. Service, State Department Duty in China, The McCarthy Era, and After, 1933-1977, Volume I, an oral history interview conducted 1977-1978, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1981.

+Caroline Service, State Department Duty in China, The McCarthy Era, and After, 1933-1977, Volume II, an oral history interview conducted in 1976, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

1950, A Family Trip to Europe

Bingham: In 1950, in June and July after our winter in New York City, we took a trip to Europe. Woodbridge preceded me by two weeks. I sailed on the S.S. Parthia with Ada de Bruyn and our three daughters--Clarissa, Evelyn, Marian--and Clarissa's Bennett College classmate Margot Glasier.

At that time Dramamine was a new drug to prevent seasickness. Following doctor's instructions, I gave us each a pill as the ship started down the Hudson River. By the time we sat down to dinner that evening after clearing the Narrows out of New York Harbor, we were all half asleep to the surprise of the two passengers who shared our table, as well as to ourselves.

On our return trip from Europe we ran into a storm, but I administered half-pills which were adequate doses and kept us on deck when most passengers were below and miserable. I suggested to a steward that the ship's doctor might alleviate much distress if he were to administer some Dramamine to the suffering passengers, and was told that seasickness "is all in the mind."

I learned another British medical fact when I got some flea bites and fearing it might be something communicable, consulted with the ship's doctor and was told fleas "have dirty little noses" with which he gave me some laxative powders to take!

We landed at Liverpool, and the girls were amazed at the rows of red brick houses along all the streets we could see from the ship. Liverpool had been badly bombed during the war, especially the dock area.

When we got to London, we stayed at a little hotel that some friends had recommended. It was in an area that had been bombed, so the floors in the hotel were rather uneven. We were quite surprised to find that our rooms, nice as they were, didn't have bathrooms with them. The toilet was in one area two floors down, and the basin was in our room. The bathroom was in the hallway near the elevator. One day one of the girls ran a bath and forgot about it, and didn't turn it off in time. It poured over the edge and went down the elevator shaft, so we heard about it from down below.
[laughter]

Then we took a bus one day and went touring to see some of London from the top of the bus. I sat next to a lady who turned to me and asked where we were from. She came from South Africa and had not been to London for fifteen years. I said, "The United States." "Oh," she said, "I didn't know you came from the United

Bingham: States. Your people have been so nice to us during the war and have been so easy to talk to, that English people now feel free to talk to one another meeting even on a bus. Which they didn't used to do."

Then we took the Dover to Calais boat to France and, as usual, had a little difficulty with getting our luggage put together at the other end. Talking French suddenly was a new experience, though I knew French quite well. And we got on a train to go to Paris from there, and stayed at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel up near the Champs Elysees. The children had rooms on the courtyard and could see the Dior windows across a courtyard at the back of the building. It was a famous fashion house.

Clare caught a bad cold and had great fun watching the models and the fittings. I also caught the cold and had to consult a doctor from the American Hospital, who prescribed some antibiotic which cured it after a few days. But I had to miss re-visiting a few of the first chateaux until I felt better.

We rented two little Citroen cars. Clare drove one, and Margot rode with her. Woodbridge and I had the other one. As I remember it, Evelyn and Marian took turns riding in one or the other car.

We went down the Loire Valley and had a beautiful trip up to Brittany, where I'd been many years before with my family. There were no longer the typical Breton costumes to be seen. Perhaps on holiday occasions they would wear them.

Levenson: Were you modeling the upbringing of your family on what your parents did with you?

Bingham: I suppose a certain amount. Because we had such an interesting time and a good time, and it made it so nice to have had this experience abroad when I was in my teens that I did think it was good for the girls to have that experience.

Levenson: Clare, did you think it was good for you?

Junge: It was a different sort of adventure. [chuckles] Yes. I think it was very good. My parents had hired a chauffeur-driven car and we were on our own with map in hand, and having to find roads and eating places. My parents had planned their trip well ahead, as had we. So there were hotel reservations made for both trips.

Levenson: And you enjoyed it?

Junge: Oh yes.

Bingham: We then drove through Normandy and visited one of the tremendous cemeteries of our soldiers there. That was very impressive but very sad to see.

Junge: We went to Omaha Beach, didn't we?

Bingham: Yes, Omaha Beach.

Junge: We could still see the ships sunk off the coast in the water and the fortified gun emplacements along the bank of the channel.

Bingham: We went to Holland and then back to England. Ada de Bruyn had gone ahead to see her family in Holland. She met us at The Hague where we stayed at a very nice little hotel near the Halls of Parliament and the Maurits Haus museum.

Marian, who was only ten at the time, was the one who really enjoyed the Maurits Haus museum. She was thrilled with it. And became quite a good artist subsequently, not just because of this, but I'm sure that she got some ideas from the beautiful paintings there.

While there we invited an elderly professor and his wife to come for dinner one night. They told us about some of their experiences during the Occupation. He'd had to ride a bicycle and go out in the country to get food for them. I said, "What did you do in the evenings?" He said, "We had no lights, so we told stories to one another," he and his family. I think they had two boys. His wife was an American. Professor Duyvendak was an outstanding scholar.

Junge: I recall his wife saying that he didn't have rubber tires on his bicycle either.

Bingham: We also took tours on a boat to Marken and Vollendan. There I bought Dutch costumes, striped skirts, and little blouses for Evie and Marian, and Dutch wooden shoes, so that they'd have costumes for costume parties. We bought some of the silver buttons that men wore on their trousers. Women had some silver buttons too. So we bought those to bring home as mementoes.

Junge: People were a little bit strange looking, as I recall.

Bingham: Yes. People on those two islands didn't get out into the world very much, so that there was a lot of intermarriage. We also visited the large museum in Amsterdam.

It was a very picturesque trip, however.

Levenson: And then you came back to England?

Bingham: Yes. The ferry trip across the English Channel was much longer than the Dover to Calais had been. It took most of a day. We stayed in London again.

Junge: For a week.

Bingham: And did some more sightseeing, going to the Tower of London and seeing the guards change at Buckingham Palace, which is always an exciting experience for young people, as well as watching the horse guards assemble in their courtyard preparatory to marching to Buckingham Palace.

Then we went down to visit some friends of Woodbridge's in Surrey, Mr. and Mrs. Hobart. Woodbridge had met him in India many years before. He'd been a district supervisor for the British government in India. They had corresponded every year since then. The Hobarts were most hospitable. They couldn't put us up in their tiny house, so we stayed at a charming inn, and the girls had to stay at a different house because there wasn't room for them at the inn.

Junge: You say it was a charming inn. [laughter] Margot and I had the experience of a chamber pot and a very cold room.

Bingham: The Hobarts had us come for high tea, the day we arrived. They showed us the little chapel at which they worshipped and where they had dedicated a statue to their son, who had been in the tank corps in North Africa. They gave this statue in his honor to the church, because he'd come through the war safely.

When we came to leave one morning, they came to say goodbye to us. I was busy talking with Woodbridge. Meanwhile Mrs. Hobart was looking at the car and talking with the girls, and I didn't realize till well after we'd left that she had taken all the candy that she'd been able to buy with her ration coupons and stuffed it in the cushions of the car so that when we were going along, we'd find these goodies! That was the height of generosity in those days.

We did stop at a little shop on the way to get some jam, because we were going to make sandwiches at lunchtime with some bread we'd bought. I didn't realize that jam also was rationed. So all the shopkeepers in the little shop where we stopped got together in the back room and came out and did sell us the jam. I guess they were debating whether they should sell it at all without coupons.

We found the English people most hospitable at that time, and they had lovely flowers in their gardens.

In London, we rented a car, a Humber Pullman, which was a great big automobile, and it was supposed to be driven by a chauffeur, but we didn't want to have a chauffeur. So Woodbridge and I sat on these

Bingham: narrow leather seats in the front and the girls were sitting in elegance in the back with a fuzzy rug under their feet. The younger girls used the jump seats part of the time.

We drove up to Oxford where Woodbridge wanted to confer with a professor, so I had the girls to entertain in the daytime. One of the first things we did was to rent a punt and go punting up the river. When we got back to the dock, the man who'd rented us the punt was very amused because we'd gone backwards the whole way. [laughter] We had a hard time keeping away from the banks, because you didn't necessarily look forward; you were pushing toward the back of the boat with the long pole.

Levenson: You're lucky you didn't go into the river!

Bingham: We'd bump into the bank sometimes and have to push ourselves out. One time I remember I was poling and I bumped straight into a boat with two nice young people making love. I felt very embarrassed, but they smiled, and we went on after we got freed.

Then we drove past Salisbury Plain to the Cotswolds. One of the Cotswold villages, Bourton-on-the-Water, had a lovely little stream running through it.

Levenson: It also has a museum of witchcraft.

Bingham: Oh, really?

I'm going to make a few comments about London as we saw it when we first got there. We were still horrified at the fact that there'd been so much bombing in London and yet, here in the bombed-out buildings, you saw little flowers growing along the walls and in cellar areas. It seemed as though they were saying, "Well, be of good cheer and things will get better." We wouldn't have seen flowers in those places otherwise.

There was terrific destruction over near St. Paul's, of course.

Levenson: Can I mention about those flowers?

Bingham: Yes.

Levenson: That's an American native that you call here fire weed and we call Rose Bay Willow Herb. That's what grew all over the ruins of London. It's a pest in the garden but a beauty on bombsites.

Junge: People had put vegetable gardens down in the base of those areas too.

Bingham: I'd forgotten about those, but I do remember many vegetable gardens in even the smallest backyards which we saw from the train.

The bravery of the people was just amazing. Everybody was so back to normal, it seemed.

Then Clare and Margot went to visit some of Margot's relatives, and they spent six or seven weeks in their homes. They had a wonderful time there. They returned to America in time to go back to Briarcliff. The rest of us went back to spend some weeks in Connecticut.

Sabbatical Leave: New York, 1950-1951

Bingham: Woodbridge took a sabbatical in New York in 1950, '51. He went up to Columbia and used to work and study there.

My father and mother had had an apartment at 14 East Ninetieth Street. After Mother died, Father married again and went to live at Seventy-Second Street with Ruth.

I was able to enroll the two younger girls at the Spence School, the old school I used to go to which had moved from West Fifty-Fifth Street to Ninety-Second Street, so they only had about two or three blocks to walk. Miss Spence's School, it used to be.

They enjoyed that very much. I joined the parents' association there, but it was mothers really. At one of the meetings which I attended they were discussing whether the school was teaching subjects that were really necessary for the girls to have. One of the mothers said, "Yes, but you don't teach them cooking or sewing or any of the practical things they will need to know in the lives they'll have to lead."

I piped up and said, "But what about the families doing that? It seems to me that's up to the mother to teach them to do sewing and cooking, rather than take valuable school time for it." And we discussed that quite a bit.

Levenson: What was the conclusion?

Bingham: That we did not teach sewing and cooking in school. In the first place, it would have meant tremendous expense for the school to install a kitchen and sewing equipment. Some of the girls, perhaps, would never have used it. They made a point at Spence School of having girls from different economic backgrounds, which I thought always was a very good idea, so that they had a cross section of the community in which the girls would eventually live.

Bingham: They did have excellent teachers and had a nice gymnasium in their new building. When I was a girl in the old building on Fifty-fifth Street, they did not have a gymnasium, and we had to go to the Young Women's Christian Association which was at 600 Lexington Avenue and Fifty-second Street. [brief interruption] Where was I?

Levenson: You were talking about exercise; going down to the Y.

Bingham: Oh yes, going down to the YW. Well, the girls had this good gymnasium in the school then and they had a wonderful experience going to a private school for a change after Berkeley public school. And of course they'd never been to a school with all girls.

The other thing that was surprising to me was that the art teaching wasn't anywhere nearly as good as the public schools in Berkeley were giving them. They were quite surprised because Marian was a very good little artist even then, which she followed up in later years and did very nice work.

Volunteer Work

The YWCA, University and National Boards

Levenson: I want to hear about the volunteer work that was really important to you. You told me that the YWCA was one of your major interests.

Bingham: I think it was in 1940 that I was invited to join the international group at the University YWCA. There was a group of board members who wanted to have me on that committee, because I had traveled and knew foreign students. So I joined this group.

Mrs. Archibald Rushforth and Mrs. Walter Gord were the leaders who I remember at first. Then later--I don't remember exactly which year--I was invited to become a member of the University YWCA Advisory Board. The students were the ones who were supposed to run the association.

The advisory board acted as the people who implemented the ideas the students wanted to carry through, and we were responsible for raising the money and for employing staff to carry out the program. The students needed help in knowing how to organize themselves and finding out what was really needed by women on campus. Ella Hagar*, in her oral history, tells better than I can when and how the University YWCA started near campus and who were the early members and executives.

*Ella Barrows Hagar, Continuing Memoirs: Family, Community, University, an oral history interview conducted 1972-1973, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

Levenson: What were the major interests of the women students and the major needs at that time?

Bingham: "Who am I?" was the current question of students. They were interested in learning about international relations. And of course, the foreign students were very glad to find a place where they could make friends.

We took part in the United Crusade, the Community Chest at that time. Sometimes we had classes and discussion groups for them, but mostly they had meetings themselves to discuss who they were and what their Christian purposes were. There was quite an interest in that kind of thing which later subsided very much when there came to be an interest in working as teacher aides in schools or volunteers at organizations in town like the School for the Blind, Children's Hospital.

I think we had an outstanding group of students. Our main purpose was to help them know how to be community leaders and workers. I should have kept some of my records to know just what they did do at that time, but they could always be looked up in the files and records of the association because they may be filed in The Bancroft Library archives. The minutes of the meetings would tell that also.

Levenson: Did you have a close relationship with Stiles Hall, the men's YMCA, and Harry Kingman?*

Bingham: Not particularly. Our executives used to know those men and they would meet together frequently to discuss the trends and what needs the students had, but as a board we didn't have any connection with them.

The husbands of a few of our board members were on the Stiles Hall board. This is the campus YMCA. So I suppose we got some ideas from them. At our meetings, we always had somebody who would talk to us, either from the campus or from a professional perspective on social welfare, health needs, or school needs, or trends of the times. One of the ministers from the community occasionally would talk to us. We also had staff and student reports on meetings. So there was always not only the discussions that we had about our committee work, but there was also the exposure to ideas. I think it was very helpful, and helped us to grow as people and to take note of what was going on in the university and in the community.

*Harry L. Kingman, Citizenship in a Democracy, an oral history conducted 1971-1972, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1974.

Bingham: I found it a most enriching experience to belong to the YW group and I made some wonderful friends there. Ella Hagar was one of the ones that I particularly remember. Laurene [Mrs. Bean M.] Palmer, her friend, was chairman for quite a while. These two ladies had belonged to the Alpha Phi Society, a sorority on campus, and that group of women had really been I think some of the outstanding people on the board over the years. Catherine Fletcher was another, and Margaret [Mrs. John G.] Hatfield became as close a friend as a sister of mine. Her mother, Mrs. Sadie C. Smith, lived close to our first house on Capistrano Avenue. She too had become a board member.

We had people with many talents. We had to do lots of things ourselves to keep the building up: make cushions for the chairs, or find people who would help with finding a rug for our living room to make it more pleasant.

Later on, Jean [Mrs. Sherman] Johnson, whose husband was the dean at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, was a tremendous help to us.

At each of our meetings we always had a devotion. One of our members was asked to give a devotion. Usually it was some bible reading on which they made comments, but often they brought other things that were very pertinent to our growing in a spiritual way.

Levenson: What sorts of contributions did you make when you gave the devotion, do you remember?

Bingham: No, I don't remember right now. I don't think mine were any outstanding ones at all.

I should mention that there was a regional YWCA group to which each association sent a member about twice a year. These included the Stanford YWCA, sometimes Reno [University of Nevada] sent a representative or two. Those meetings related us to the national organization and to one another.

Another person who was very good was Elizabeth Gordon, Mrs. Walter Gordon whom I mentioned before as a member of the international committee. She was the one black lady we had on the board for a long time, until the 1970s I guess, when there was such an emphasis on desegregation. Then we invited a number of black women to join us on the board. They were most intelligent and helpful--Christine Scott and Mrs. Drake, Dorothy Pitts, and one other lady whose husband was on the UC faculty.

Another person I think I forgot to tell you about was Ruth Vickery. Her husband was a contractor, and she was very closely connected with the Church Divinity School of the Pacific and used to

Bingham: be a volunteer there. Ruth helped me to be nominated for the national board of the YW and I became a member of that in 1955 until 1961. Laurene Palmer and I shared a room at the 1955 convention in New York City. She shared my excitement at being elected to the national board of which the student YWs in this country were a recognized group. I served one term on the national board, then I felt it was someone else's turn to go because I'd been lucky to have that connection. It was really quite a strain because there were lots of reports to read. Then we went to two meetings a year held in New York with the total board all over the country.

I had previously been asked to chair the rules committee for the national convention held on Chicago in 1952. So, with a dry throat and weak knees, wearing my new, thin wool dress and white hat, I stood before three thousand women to read the rules of the convention. Fortunately, the little staff lady who was assigned to help me was an early YW acquaintance, Frances Moser.

The National Student Administrative Committee always met Saturday following the whole week of National Board meetings. I found that very trying because we were so tired that it was very hard to listen to more talk. But it was a very stimulating experience to be in that group of people because they were outstanding leaders from all these different communities across the country. You could feel their regional problems as they talked. There was always a stimulating talk by an outstanding leader of students from the YW or YMCA or a church.

Miss Lilace Barnes was president of the national YW for a good part of the time that I was on the board. Then Mrs. Marti [spells name] took over. She came from the Middle West. Lilace Barnes had been the president of the world YWCA. She became quite a close friend because they had an Asilomar conference here of our western regional conference. It used to meet once in three years at Asilomar. When she came out, she came and visited us one time; then I drove her down to Asilomar. It was the year when the succulents along the shore were particularly beautiful, so I took some pictures of those, and that's a nice reminder of that year. I wish I could remember the year offhand but I'll have to look up my slides and see.

One of the main things they were all talking about in those years was who-am-I? The students were very confused, I guess, because many of them had come from small communities and came to this huge university, in a totally different community than they were accustomed to and they needed to find their place; so we tried to help them with that kind of thinking and tried to introduce them to the needs of all the different groups in this community. That was one way they were helped, by doing volunteer work.

Levenson: Were you president of the Cal YWCA board?

Bingham: Yes, I became president, but much later than the time I'm speaking of. It was well after I had been on the national board. That was a strange happenstance. I think that one of the ladies who was to have been president became ill and I was vice-president. It was during the summer when everybody was away on vacation, and so I assumed the acting presidency. I don't remember their having an election, but I think it was rather automatic that I continued.

It was quite a responsibility but there were wonderful people on the heads of committees, and I had a good executive committee, so that made it very much easier than it could have been.

Levenson: What do you think are the characteristics necessary for a good board chairperson?

Bingham: I think they need a great deal of understanding of people and situations, and keep themselves well informed about what the organization is doing and has done in the past, their tradition in other words. Also I think you have to be able to get along with other people and encourage them, bring them along with you. A chairperson needs self-confidence, ability to listen as well as to speak well. Someone recently told me a chairman needs to have charisma!

I find I did a great deal by telephone because you could plan a meeting ahead and have it run smoothly, where if you left it till just the last minute and hoped that they'd follow the outline you'd made in the executive committee for the board meeting, it might work well, but sometimes you really had to key people in ahead of time and remind them of what their duties would be.

I think that one has to be sure and kind and very able to listen as well as to talk. I had also followed the leadership we had previously. I always thought of the other presidents and what I liked about the way they'd handled matters, so that I could follow along in that general idea. I think that's true of any board that you're on.

When you work with people you have to be very sensitive to situations and to them. It's also important to keep calm during heated discussions while thinking about how best to help resolve the problem under discussion.

I think another thing you have to do as a chairman is to encourage people to speak directly to the subject and with brevity and clarity. So many people get carried away once they begin to talk and talk on and on, and don't know when to stop. Then they lose the effectiveness of the idea that they're trying to get across.

Bingham: I think you, as a chairman, have to be very well informed on what the subject is under discussion and also not only lead the meetings but read the minutes afterwards to be sure that you remember what's been discussed and to see if there are any corrections. An important factor is to plan meetings carefully ahead and to be sure those who are to give reports are prepared. My main feeling was that you had to be friendly and courteous and appreciative, and that that brought out the best in people.

We used to get students to come and talk to us too, and tell us what they thought their needs were, as well as to report on specific activities in the association. This was very helpful. We had our staff report to us, of course, and the staff were outstanding people. Lily Margaret Sherman had been there for many years as the director--executive secretary, I guess it was called. Then she was followed by Leila Anderson. Lily Margaret retired and was unwell for quite a while and finally died.

Leila Anderson was young and came from the South. She was a wonderful person; we all enjoyed her very much. We always had one or two of the women deans on our board too. We tried to get a representative group of different parts of the community: some wives of ministers, many wives of professors, and a few wives of community people. That made quite a rich experience for all of us.

USO (United Service Organization)

Bingham: While I was on the national board of YWCA, I was asked to be a member of the USO committee. That is United Service Organization, which was originated partly by Admiral Nimitz and others at the very beginning of the Second World War. During the First World War, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, the YWCA, the Red Cross, had all been separate groups working with the army in Europe, and it got very confusing sometimes. So these men decided it would be better to have an overall organization and asked these organizations to be members of the overall one. It really worked out very well.

The way that it worked was that at certain places, the YWCA was responsible for the USO; other places, the YMCA was; and at still others, some of the other organizations, Jewish National Welfare and the Catholic groups, Red Cross, et cetera. The YWCA was to be responsible for the USO in San Francisco. I was not on the San Francisco committee organization itself.

I went to one or two of their meetings. They were mostly business and community leaders in San Francisco. I was asked to be for the YWCA the chairman of the operating committee in San Francisco, which meant that we had a board which operated the rooms that were hosting the servicemen, and we were responsible for staff people and programs.

The first place we had was up on the second storey of an office building on Market Street, and a long stairway went up to it. Well, the servicemen who sometimes came in were pretty rough, and they poked holes in the walls. Finally, we moved to the south side of Market Street. We had one great big room at street level with two or three little offices in the back of it where the staff worked. Then there was a downstairs big basement room where they could have dances and parties. There was also a small kitchen near the offices.

In this upstairs part, we had games on the counter so the boys could come in and they could read books in the front corner of the building, where there were books, magazines, and easy chairs. We would ask our friends to bring books, paperbacks mostly, and magazines. Many young men would come in and sit there and read books. Others would come and play games with one of the hostesses, or one of the staff people at the counter. We organized parties occasionally.

The big trouble was to try to get girls, because parents were not anxious for their daughters to go to the USO and to meet all kinds of different servicemen from all over the country. So this was really a very difficult thing for the lady who was in charge of arranging the parties. She would apply to and visit schools or churches and ask if they would send some girls down to come and be hostesses.

Bingham: I only went to one or two of these parties. I remember one time a fellow got drunk and came in. He started to argue with another man. They were just about to have a fist fight when the executive director stepped in between them and just her being there and stepping in between them, made them stop immediately.

I thought she had courage and she said, "Well, that's what we're trained to do."

Levenson: Impressive.

Bingham: Yes. Marjorie Dodson had been a Red Cross worker before she came to this USO. We had some girls who were very faithful about coming. They always got a lecture, of course, before they started being volunteers, telling them how to behave and what to do and not to do; not to give their names or addresses, only telephone numbers, and so on, so that we tried our best to make it easy and safe for the girls to come. Of course, the girls were chaperoned while at the club.

Levenson: Did you have any major problems?

Bingham: No, I don't remember any. At least we didn't hear about it in the committee. If there were, they were handled well and quietly, because the young staff women we had were outstandingly able.

Marjorie Sheffield was the first executive I worked with. She was promoted to lead the Bay Area staff. As a committee, we used to try to have a dinner once a year and meet together socially so that we would get to be friends as well as committee members. Marge was very good at these. She had a nice sense of humor and a light touch. Also she was a very good disciplinarian in the club.

There was an Oakland USO and sometimes Bay Area events were planned, such as having an incoming airplane carrier ship's personnel form the USO letters on deck to be photographed from the Golden Gate Bridge as the ship passed under the bridge. One early morning, the men wore white so it would show better in the photo. This was then used for newspaper publicity.

The staff and I were invited to come aboard to talk with the officer for personnel about what we had to offer at the San Francisco club as well as to find out what he felt the men(non-officers) on shore leave would benefit by having it available. We were also able to take groups on excursions and to get tickets to special events sometimes--concerts, theater, et cetera, for which we requested tickets from our friends or the event managers.

The next lady who came was Marge Dodson. It's amazing, they were both Marjorie. Marge Dodson was a very quiet, ladylike person who'd been brought up, I think, in the South. She had a lovely, gracious way about her. But she could be just as sure and stern as she needed to be.

Bingham: I thought it took a great deal of ability to be an executive director there, and physical stamina, as it was not an easy job.

The young women we had under them changed quite a bit. One was the program chairman. She had to plan for dances and what parties they were going to have. Another one would have to do with the daily scheduling of what was going on and the decorations. So we usually had two people. I would try to bring in things from my garden to decorate the club as often as I could. Even just green branches would help, because it was a great big barnlike place otherwise. The area where the club was located was not a very desirable one, so I never liked to have to go at night.

We had a judge on the committee and we had some church people. Some of them were very kind. There was a very nice Jewish couple who were on our committee. They worked hard and conscientiously. One lady who was very affable and helpful was a Mrs. Gysenberg, who lived in San Francisco. Her vocation was mending pottery and in mending fabrics. Yet she was awfully interested in young people. She joined the committee and was very good on it. She would do all kinds of telephoning and arranging that we needed, and a good thinking person, and kindhearted too. You need those on a committee.

When I went East for the national board meetings, I would meet with the USO committee of the national board, and hear what was going on across the country. The USO had operations in Guam and in other places abroad. There were some posts that were very difficult, and it was hard to get staff to go to them. The staff were rotated occasionally if they wished.

Board Member of the Pacific School of Religion for Thirty-Six Years

Bingham: Then in 1945, I was asked to be on the board of Pacific School of Religion. That was a strange situation. Cushman McGiffert was the president at the time. I met him at a New Year's party and he asked me whether I would be interested in serving on the board. I said, "Why? What have I to contribute?" "Well," he said, "we need somebody who knows about housekeeping." [laughter] I thought that was awfully funny because his wife was an excellent housekeeper and she had done a great deal at the school. But evidently she wanted some more help from somebody on the board. So I agreed to do that.

I was put on the house and grounds committee and had to see about new shades in the students' dormitory. That was one of the minor parts of it because the thing was that here I was associated with men who were in business in San Francisco--bankers and men who

Bingham: were on college boards, directors--and I felt very small in comparison.

Mrs. William Bade was the only woman on the board of trustees at that time and was years older than I was. She had been on the board some years. She and her husband had led an archeological expedition in Palestine, at Tel en Nasbeh, and brought back wonderful treasures from there, from the old world. They are in the Bade Museum, along with marvelous books that have been collected for the library for the purpose of further study. They wrote about their expedition, I think three volumes.

Mrs. Bade lived in Berkeley, on the south side of town. Later on when she came to see me, she told me about her experience of the Berkeley fire in 1923. She was a very small person but very dynamic. Sparkling blue eyes. Now she lives with her sister in San Diego. There were three sisters at one time who lived together. She's over ninety, and her sister who lives with her is over ninety also. So these three elderly ladies kept house together. Mrs. Bade's son lives in Berkeley. Her daughter, Mrs. Bacon, has worked at International House for a number of years.

I thought it must have been a lovely home because they all were very dynamic people and contributed a lot to the school as far as spirit went.

Levenson: Sounds wonderful. Just so I get it straight, what denomination was the Pacific School of Religion and what function was it serving at the time?

Bingham: The Pacific School of Religion was founded by Congregational ministers and it was an interdenominational school. It is not any one particular faith. We had Methodists and Congregationalists mainly; they were the strongest faction. Not Episcopalians, because they had their own school. Then we had students from other denominations.

Levenson: Was it graduate school training for the ministry and for teaching?

Bingham: Yes, it was. At that time, they did not have a close relation with the university because of the state law about separation of church and state. But in the 1970s, there was a new president at the school and a new president at the university, and they worked out a very nice working relationship so that credits were given to UC students who wanted to take some of our courses, some of the courses offered by our faculty. This was reciprocated by the university for our students. So this was a very good thing I felt, because they could enrich their whole breadth of knowledge by doing this.

Levenson: There's been an extraordinary growth--the Graduate Theological Union.

Bingham: Yes. That evolved very nicely and has been a very strong thing, and actually a very unusual one. I believe it's the only one in the country where so many faiths have banded together to help with the educating of ministers and educators. I think there are nine different faiths involved: Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Church Divinity School of the Pacific; there's some Jewish people; there are two or three different Catholic groups--Dominicans, Jesuits, and Franciscans. Then the Presbyterians in San Francisco and at San Anselmo have taken part too.

It was written up in a copy of Time magazine two or three years ago.

Levenson: What do you think the Pacific School of Religion gained and what, if anything, did it lose by becoming part of the Graduate Theological Union?

Bingham: I think it gained some interesting students, for one thing. And I think working with different people in different faiths made the spirit of Christianity much stronger because when you divide people up as much as we were divided--for instance, foreign students have asked me why there were so many different kinds of churches in this country. The fact that there was this Graduate Theological Union I think led to the fact that there need not be that many different faiths; that there was much that they had in common. I think that was brought to people's attention.

I felt we lost a good deal when we gave some of our library over to the main library, because we had some wonderful books. However, we did keep the Bade Library intact at the Pacific School of Religion. That was such a valuable library. Also we kept all the artifacts and the Howell Bible collection. This was all by agreement when Pacific School of Religion joined the Graduate Theological Union.

The English in Action Program

Bingham: Some years later they asked me to join the piano club, not as an active musician but as an associate member. I stayed with that a few years until I undertook a real responsibility at the YWCA. That responsibility was helping foreign students with learning English. It was called English in Action. That started in about 1956.

Levenson: How did that work?

Bingham: We were responsible for finding volunteers to talk one hour a week with the students, and you'd be surprised at how much help that was. So when we found ourselves with fifty students, I had to get fifty volunteers who would come once a week for an hour and talk with a student.

In that hour they learned more about English grammar or English vocabulary, and practiced their English, and also they could ask questions about anything in the community that puzzled them. So we needed to have people who were wise and who were helpful to students; who enjoyed talking to students. There have been some wonderful connections made that way. One lady in particular I remember told me that she'd taken a trip to Japan. She'd met with mainly Japanese students who were in this country. Of course any student who came to this country was supposed to know English well enough to go to class and understand what was going on. So often they would go to class and the professor would talk fast, or it would be a language they weren't accustomed to--a specialized language--so that they didn't really catch on readily.

When it came to speaking, they were really at a loss because it was hard to put sentences together. This program gave them a good chance to make sentences. Some of these volunteers entertained the students at their homes and were very generous to them.

Years later, this lady that I started to talk about, went to Japan and she was entertained by all the different students. Word got around, you see, that she was coming, and she had a wonderful time! She didn't know any Japanese but she didn't have to, because these young people undertook to look after her.

This happened to a couple of people in different places. So it was a really exciting program in its way. It all started because there was a lady, Miss Davis, who came out from Princeton, New Jersey. She had worked with this type of program there and in New York City. She talked to Ann Kern, our executive director at the time. Ann Kern followed Leila Anderson as director of the University YWCA. Miss Davis asked if there would be anybody who might be able or willing to start English in Action at the University YW in Berkeley. So Ann Kern suggested me because she knew that I had had a lot of connection with students outside the YW.

I talked it over with this lady and she outlined for us the process of starting it and carrying it on. It took quite a lot of work because I used to telephone evenings in order to get the students and of course, the volunteers didn't always like to be called in the evening, but I had to make the appointment for them.

Then there would be the student who wouldn't turn up. The lady would come there and wait for an hour. I never let her wait that long, because I knew she'd have other things to do. Then we'd have

Bingham: students who'd come and the volunteer would be late, and that would be distressing to them. They weren't getting their full hour.

We had one Japanese young man who lived at International House. He came into my study one day and brought two students, friends of his who he thought needed English. He was very enthusiastic about our program. He was constantly bringing other friends. One day three of them sat on the little wicker couch that I had in my study, and they were talking away in Japanese. I turned around and shook my finger, and said, "Look, you're here to learn English. How about talking English?" So we had a good laugh over that.

I think this must have been in the 1970s because it seems to me we went off to Hong Kong and at that time. I handed my program over to Rose Takahashi and to Gertrude Strong, who'd been my right-hand assistants in the program. They took responsibility for running the office when I wasn't there.

We kept a careful card file of all the students and the volunteers, and tried to do a really good orderly business of it.

There were the student uprisings in that time too, in 1969. [People's Park] We were right on Bancroft Way and Sproul Plaza was just a little ways down the block. The police had to use tear gas and it was blown up our way because there was a west wind. It came into the windows and we were all affected, our eyes streaming. Then a lot of students began coming in. I was really quite fearful of what might happen.

All of a sudden there was a man who appeared at the door of my little office. He pulled the side of his sweater back and he had a big police badge on and he said, "We're here to look after you." So that made me feel awfully good to think that he'd mixed in with the crowd and come to help us.

Well, nothing happened, except there were so many young people there that we had to tell them more couldn't come into the building any more. Because of fire laws, we were not allowed to have more than a certain number of people in the building. So we had some exciting times.

Another time I looked out the window when there was a big uprising at Sproul Plaza. Here was a little army pickup truck with men standing on the back and guns pointed down toward the Sproul Plaza. I thought "golly," I never thought I'd live to see this happen in the United States. But they didn't have to shoot, fortunately, and they went off when the crowd dispersed after speeches ended.

But some of those times, if you'd go back there in the evening, you'd find the streets blocked off with barricades and police or soldiers watching that nobody went by, because they couldn't protect the university otherwise. It was a pretty tense time.

Problems of Activism at Pacific School of Religion

Bingham: Meanwhile, at the Pacific School of Religion, they also had their troubles. I was put on a committee there that was supposed to review the problem. We had a few, really very few students, who were activists. There was one in particular who made a great deal of trouble. One day they had a little bomb that went off near the chapel. It didn't do any damage at all, but just the idea that anybody had the nerve to do this caused us to call those men in and ask them please to listen to our point of view. Also we were to review and see whether they were fit to continue in the school or whether they should be dismissed. That I felt was a terrible responsibility. But two men and I were the ones who had to make that decision.

I shall never forget sitting up in front of those angry faces and having to think whether they should have such a stern thing as that happen to them, because it would be such a mark on their careers.

One of the men was a minister in Orinda, Mr. Fred Twining. I don't remember who the other one was, right now. We decided that the students should be allowed to continue but that we would take particular pains to see that they were well instructed by some of the professors who, in turn, helped to talk with these students and give them work to do.

The one I was assigned to was Professor [John Herbert] Otwell; he gave assignments to do research on what the university was doing and what he thought would be constructive to follow through with. By giving these students research to do, beside their homework for their classes, we finally were able to get things calmed down.

They had a student government committee also that was to represent all the students, so we had some meetings with them. I didn't personally go to those because they were in the evening and I wasn't going out much in the evenings for that kind of thing.

But I was very, very thrilled as I thought back on it later, to think that one of those men has really taken quite a responsible position in the Northern California Ecumenical Council, which is the governing group of the Northern California Congregation of Churches. He still has some pretty radical ideas, but he's been able to fit into a pattern of administration and working with other people, which I think is remarkable. He was a big football player, so he was rather an awesome type of person.

Levenson: Is it unusual for a lay board, not the administration or faculty, to have that sort of disciplinary responsibility?

Bingham: I don't know that. You know, I've never inquired into it in other situations. But any board is responsible for the running of an institution and for the managing of the finances, and you can't get people to support an institution that's being so radical if you aren't careful. So therefore it's very right that some of the board should be responsible in helping in a situation like that. Of course, we did it in cooperation with the faculty and the administration.

Pacific School of Religion: A Great Experience

Bingham: It's been a great experience there because I think the whole institution of the Pacific School of Religion had had a very close relationship between the faculty and the staff and the board. We don't see a great deal of each other, at least I didn't as a board member see much of the faculty except when I went to meetings and they reported or some such thing as that. But it's a wonderful feeling to know that you can consult with these people and, of course, with the telephone you can always call up and have a conversation with someone.

I felt we were in such good hands. Stuart Anderson was the president at that time, Dr. Stuart Leroy Anderson. It was terribly hard on him. Some time after this he retired from the school. He took up a church in Long Beach, California. I think that's where he'd been before he came to the school, actually.

I should tell you that after Dr. McGiffert, the president was Ronald Bridges and he was president for about three years, I believe. Then Dr. Anderson was called because Mr. Bridges wanted to go back East where he had always lived. He was a man who'd had polio years before, I believe, so he wasn't terribly strong. He was an awfully nice person to work with, and he was a great friend of the poet Robert Tristram Coffin. So he brought him out here for the annual Pastoral Conference one year.

The Pastoral Conferences, I felt, were one of the great experiences I had. People in the ministry from all over the West would come to the meetings because there were lectures by our professors and others, and we would bring out special lecturers. The Earl Lectures were a great event. They had been endowed years ago by a Mr. Earl in the community. We could afford to have people brought from Germany, from England, from far away, to lecture.

In the early days they used to ask even former presidents of the United States to come. I didn't have that experience, but they had outstanding people come and give an evening lecture or the morning lecture. I attended them, and even went to the seminars because in

Bingham: the seminars I could hear our own professors talk and I got to know who they were and what they taught and how they taught it; also what they wrote. That way, when I was on the board, I could make a comment if there was to be a reappointment or a promotion. I felt I could speak up with knowledge. It was really quite a privilege to be on that board.

After Ronald Bridges, then we had Stuart Anderson. After Dr. Anderson retired, we invited Davie Napier who had been at Stanford and was rather a controversial figure because he'd been very outspoken in the radical movement. Some people were very much against having him come and other people were very much for him, because he was a dynamic person; had great appeal, and was a good administrator.

Levenson: How did you feel?

Bingham: I was awfully much on the fence and I did some telephoning to various people before I made up my mind that probably we should have him.

Levenson: What did you feel about the position of your church and politics?

Bingham: I think it's inevitable that a church develops an opinion about politics. They can't help it in some instances, when it involves the very community in which you live and which you're working in. But I think it is wise to have a certain division, because if you get politics into the church, it's a very bad thing. I don't think I'm really answering it very positively, but I feel that we should basically have a division between state and church, but that there should be a feeling of cooperation.

I have a strong feeling that people should have a religion because it really is such a great help in times of need, and you don't know it until you have a time of need. Young people can't appreciate this because they haven't had enough experience, so that I feel very strongly that it's important for your people to have any kind of teaching in religion, whichever sect is suitable to their family, to their situation.

I used to think when we were in China that the missionaries had done marvelous things there in medicine and in education. But I wasn't so sure that they needed to go in and tell the people what they ought to think philosophically, because the Chinese had a pretty good basic philosophy. I feel that about India nowadays. It disturbs me that the Indians have had such a hold on some of our young people and Indian beliefs in this country, because I don't think it's so suitable to our kind of world, and it takes them out of the world in a way. They think about themselves so much. Its meditation

Bingham: and its calmness is really helpful, because we're in such a hectic situation. But I think that we need to be careful of this because it might be too strong over here.

I guess that's all I need to say about the Pacific School.

Personal Faith

Levenson: I'd like to ask, Ursula, how your faith has helped in time of trouble, and what your personal beliefs are.

Bingham: I was brought up a Presbyterian in New York City. My cousin, Henry Sloane Coffin, who was quite a prominent minister, was the one whose church we attended. I went to Sunday School regularly. Then when I went to Foxcroft, we went to an Episcopal church. I think I mentioned earlier that in the summertime, my mother had gone to the Episcopal church in Lenox, Massachusetts, because the Congregational church was not as congenial a group of people and they didn't have as strong a minister. The Episcopal church there had been the one her mother had attended, I guess, for some of the time.

I suppose, frankly, it was partly the social group that went there. Her friends went to the Episcopal church and didn't go to the Congregational church. Later on, as we grew up, they took us to the Congregational church in Lenox because it was important to continue with the same general type of thinking that we had in the winter. I was glad to have had the experience of both.

As far as my own personal beliefs are, I think that it's very important to have had that background. I've been a faithful church-goer all my life until recently when it's been so difficult to get there. Even now, I listen on the radio every Sunday. But I think one has to have that type of faith and teaching to realize that through the centuries, certain tenets have been very important to people. Some of the things that are taught in the Bible--the Bible stories and the people that are there, I think have made a great impression on my beliefs.

Levenson: Do you believe in God?

Bingham: Well, I can't say directly yes. I believe in the things that the Christian church teaches and I think the strength of that is what I'm most appreciative of. I think there has to be a deity, but I don't know that I can say I believe in God just that way, because since I've been connected with Oriental religions, I realize also that many of their teachings are very wonderful, and they don't believe in God as such. So I can't say that I'm as convinced about that as I used to be as a very young person.

The Rewards of Volunteer Work

Levenson: To sum up somewhat your experiences, Ursula, what do you feel that you personally got from volunteer work?

Bingham: I think I got a great deal of understanding of people, of appreciation of community life and of all kinds of abilities that people have to have to work with one another. I think this is something that many people miss in life. They don't realize how important it is to be in a group and have your own thoughts but also have to fit in with the thoughts of other people and the work of other people.

Then I felt very humble when I was associated with eminent professors or eminent businessmen who were on these boards that I worked with. They were so thoughtful of me and so appreciative of the fact that I did some of the legwork when they were busy and they were ready to help with outlining things for me when I wasn't absolutely clear about something. I think that one learns a great deal from associating with a varied group of people.

Levenson: It seems to me that you started at the Pacific School of Religion as a sort of Martha. You said "House and Grounds." But that you evidently worked your way to positions of great responsibility. You gave me one example, the disciplinary committee on which you served.

Bingham: Yes, that's true. And I served on a great variety of committees. I was on the buildings and grounds committee at the time the chapel was built and had to work with the architect and with Mr. Brock, who was one of our board members, who asked the most incisive questions and really caught up a great many of the problem situations in the building before it was too late. I admired that.

He was a man who had been in real estate, so he was used to looking at buildings and knowing what was good and what wasn't; what was needed; what would be needed; foreseeing what would be needed, and so on.

The architect came from Santa Barbara. He was a very delightful gentleman.

I think in all those associations, I always wanted to learn. That's another thing I got from Foxcroft [School]. When you graduated, that was the beginning of your learning experiences, and I'm sure that's true. I've told that to many young people, that when they're graduated they're not through learning. With that attitude, I think people are much more accepting of one. Because if they think that you're not going to learn by what you're doing, they don't want to bother to teach you.

Bingham: I really felt very privileged, not only on the executive committee; I was on the budget committee at one time, but I'm no good at finance, so I didn't stay on that very long.

Let's see what other ones there were. Oh, the instruction committee had to do with the appointment of faculty. That I was able to help with because oftentimes Woodbridge would bring home a letter that was being circulated at the university, telling about some new idea in appointments or the rules that should govern appointments at the university. I discussed some of those with the president of the school, because he would know what to pass on, what was appropriate.

All of these things, you learn a great deal. As I say, I felt very responsible. I think if you're a volunteer who takes it as seriously as I did, that then you do get appointed to good positions. I was second vice-president of the school for a while. I had to run one or two of the executive meetings. This was very difficult for me to do because I didn't have the self-confidence to do it with a great deal of poise. But I did my best.

Oh, before I became the second vice-president, I had been chairman of the nominating committee. That took a great deal of thought and work, because you had to find out from other members of the board, including faculty, who they would recommend as good board members, and then propose it to the committee, and think all this through very carefully, because we wanted to have a balance of different faiths and different age groups. Then we gradually put more and more women on the board. This has been a good thing, because there are some very able women that have come on now.

Then we had to think about people who had money that could help us financially. And to balance that with a quality person is sometimes difficult because it doesn't necessarily go together. So it was a big learning experience and it was wonderful to interpret such a good school to the community as I talked to people.

They asked me to be on the redecorating committee at the time that some part of the church was being done over. That was partly because my family at that time still were in business with W&J Sloane, and I think they thought I'd be able to get some things for them for less money than if they paid just the regular price.

Levenson: Could you?

Bingham: No, I couldn't, because they had a policy against that. If you were family, you could get it for yourself for a little less, but not for other people. That wasn't quite fair. I finally resigned because I felt that I'd given my best and I didn't want really to have the burden of the decision making that I'd had.

Bingham: We also had gotten some very good young people on the board.

Levenson: From what I hear, you were admirable.

Bingham: Well, it was fun. It really was a great privilege and a growing experience continually.

Levenson: How long did you serve?

Bingham: Thirty-six years. That's an awfully long time. [laughter]

Levenson: That's amazing!

Bingham: My father used to be a lawyer in New York and when he came home, he never talked about his work, and he taught us not to talk about ourselves. So sometimes this is difficult for me to do, tell about all the things I've done.

When I got to making a list of them, I was appalled to think that some of those years during my life I've been so busy. But I always felt that my family and my children should come first. So when these things came up, I always consulted with Woodbridge before I accepted thm.

One of the things I believe is that no matter where you are, home is what you make it for your family, whether in the U.S.A. or China or one floor in a house, in Japan or even a hotel room in Iran.

V TRAVEL, BACK TO CHINA, DEATHS, ILLNESS, AND LIFE

Collecting and Travel

Levenson: You have many beautiful pieces of furniture and pictures in this house. Did you do much serious art collecting during your travels and your stays in China?

Bingham: We did collect things when we were traveling. They weren't always specially art things. We didn't collect valuable art things because we didn't, in the first place, have money to do it with. But we did collect things we enjoyed like the prints and pictures that we have, or the rugs that we got in Peking. I'm so thankful we did, because the quality is so much less good now.

Dyes of rugs that The Fette Company made have not faded at all. But the others that we've bought since then, the colors have faded so they are not nearly as good, nor are the patterns as fine.

I guess I am always the one who liked to shop. Of course, my poor Woodbridge really disliked shopping very much and couldn't understand what pleasure I got out of it. But part of it is that I see beautiful things and learn about the ones that are made in different periods or the quality of different objects. I find it's quite an education. From each shopkeeper or each place where I went to go to see good things, there was something to learn. Plus the fact that when we visited temples, we often saw the best, in Japan and China.

You also meet people who are interested in that kind of thing. It has a great deal to offer, collecting. But on the other hand, I don't think I always did the best about choosing which objects to purchase. One can always learn more.

We were lucky to have had those trips to China and the Far East, and also to have had a year to go around the world. I was thrilled with that experience.

1. The Bingham daughters outside 27 Tamalpais Road, Berkeley, 1945. Left to right, Marian, Clare, Anne, Evelyn
2. Three generations outside the front door at Woodbridge House, Salem, 1963
Left to right:
back row Clare Bingham Brown, Marian Bingham Hubbell, Anne Bingham Pierson
second row Marian Sloane Brown, Clarissa Anne Brown, Woodbridge Bingham holding Drika Bingham Hubbell, Ursula holding Cordelia Comfort Stewart Pierson, Richard Norris Pierson III
front row Phyllis Wyatt Brown, Edward Eagle Brown Alexandra Pierson, Olivia Pierson
3. Woodbridge Bingham, 1971, by G. Paul Bishop



1.



2.



3.

Levenson: When was that?

Bingham: It was 1959-'60. We first went over to Paris where we received word that our little granddaughter, Phyllis Wyatt Brown, had arrived in Munich. We were going to take a plane; got way out to the airport, and the plane wasn't flying due to fog in Munich, so we had to get a taxi back into Paris. In those days, the airplane companies didn't help you when they couldn't make a flight. They said, "Well, no, we don't have a bus; we don't have any way of getting you back. You have to make your own arrangements."

We went to the train station in Paris; we got reservations on a train to Munich. And arrived the next day. Then we spent a month in Munich, in a hotel, and Clare and her family, the Browns, were out at the army center at Perlacher Forst.

The weather in Munich was very dismal; it was November, and there was fog and overcast all day, almost every day. We had just one little snow flurry. But we had a good time in Munich. I had studied a very little German.

Marketing for Clare a few times was quite different from home. In a central square were fruits and vegetables displayed on tables by several different salespeople. Around this square and in small streets near it were the little meat stores. In each there was but one kind of meat, beef or pork or chicken or ducks. It was a time-consuming project to go to market and to have to deal with all these separate groups. I would return to the fine hotel with my bags of purchases to be taken out in the afternoon to Perlacher Forst for Clare's family. Not many other guests would be seen doing this! My German being almost non-existent, I had to use my hands a lot to help explain my wishes, but it was always pleasant dealing with those market people.

One day, I had the fun of taking my seven-year-old granddaughter, Marian Sloane Brown, to the Völkerkunde Museum. There was to be an exhibition of Colombian gold objects. On the way we walked past one of the government buildings that had been bombed and was empty, and she was horrified to think that it had been burned out during the war. So we had quite a talk about war and buildings and so on, as well as about these beautiful Colombian gold objects.

Ever after that, when she'd see me, she'd say, "Can we go to a museum?" So I took her to a number of exhibitions, including one in New York many years later, at the Metropolitan; she always enjoyed going there. And I've taken others of my granddaughters to museums.

I think the time I took Drika Hubbell to the Metropolitan Museum in New York was most interesting. Woodbridge took her brother, Brad, to the Natural History Museum which Wood thought Brad would enjoy more.

Bingham: We saw a special exhibition of Russian clothes. Some of them were peasant costumes, but also some which had been those of Peter the Great (so tall), and his wife, the Empress Catherine, so small when a bride but quite portly as an older woman.

Because it was not yet time to meet Woodbridge and Brad, we took a quick look at beautiful gold objects, bowls, cups, ewers, et cetera. This find was discovered after a farmer ploughing his field in a deep valley between the Caspian and Black Seas had turned up a gold object and subsequently reported this to authorities who alerted archeologists who scientifically uncovered these magnificent ancient treasures. Very similar to ones I'd seen in Iran.

Drika has talked about this a number of times since then.

So now we're seeing the treasures from the Vatican in San Francisco. I got tickets for some of our granddaughters to go and see those beautiful things that they may not go to Europe to see, because in California we are so far away from Europe. When these marvellous things come to us, we feel very fortunate.

After Munich, we went to Istanbul for about a week. Our arrival near midnight enabled us to have a grand surprise. The next morning, we saw that our room overlooked the Bosphorus!

We contacted a friend of mine, Ruth van Meter, a YWCA International executive working with Turkish women and girls at the Lisan Vesanat [Girls Service Center]. I met with a group there one morning and found that at the center they conducted classes in English, typing and sewing as well as other things.

I also learned that some parents objected to their daughters going there because of the Christian connection of the world YWCA which sponsored Miss van Meter's work. Ruth van Meter was most kind to us there and we saw her a number of times. Mrs. Celal Morali, a Turkish lady I met in Berkeley, had a unique party for us. At their apartment we met the Turkish architect who was assistant to the American architect of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, which was so beautifully done with artistic Turkish feeling.

We were encouraged to visit a newly-renovated small mosque where we saw the work in process of uncovering old tile decorations under layers of plaster and paint. This work was undertaken under supervision of the Dunbarton Oaks Museum in Washington, D.C.

We flew to Iran at night. Iran allowed to daytime flights from Istanbul to Tehran in 1959. Arriving at about 5:00 a.m., we were met by one of the United States Embassy staff with a jeep. My cousin, Selden Chapin, had been ambassador to Iran several years before and we had a letter to Ambassador Wales which helped us in many ways during our stay of four months. This is a whole other story which I must tell another time.

Bingham: We flew to Shiraz in March and had an introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Glines. He was the United States representative there who enabled us to be driven to Persepolis for the day. This drive across country across rather barren plains at that season, with tree-lined roads and a few smoky villages. Persepolis was in the distance, over a low range of mountains and in the next plain.

A most stunning location for palaces built on a high platform area where now only a few pillars remain to show the height and grandeur of the main hall. We took many pictures and lunched at the little hotel nearby. Then we drove out to see the tomb locations of Xerxes and Darius, now empty hillside caves accessible by tall ladders.

On the return drive, our driver took Woodbridge a short walk up a lowhill to see a monument. I noticed a man with a donkey on which rode a woman, coming across the plain towards us. I got out of the car and suddenly realized a man and boy were walking towards me from beyond our jeep. The man had a big stick in hand. So I beckoned to them to come look at my camera, which they did to their wonderment and to my relief. They were distracted!

When we arrived in New Delhi, we stayed at a big hotel. I think it was called the Taj Mahal. The servants waited on us in the dining room with bare feet, and that was quite a surprise. Such courteous, wonderful servants they were. Beautiful dining room.

The thing I remember particularly about that hotel was big quantities of bougainvillea that they had growing. They were golden colored; I've never seen that before. Usually it's been this bright purplish color which I really don't care for, though I have seen nice crimson red ones more recently.

But this hotel just had masses of this golden color. It was somewhat variegated with pinkish-red bougainvillea growing outside the dining room and on several sides of the building.

The other thing that was extraordinary in New Delhi, one day we were going along and here came an elephant down the street! Then there was a completely naked man who walked along. He was a member of some sort of a sect that didn't believe in wearing clothes, I guess.

We visited the fort there on the day when there were a lot of country people who came in. The men had on great big anklets, which I had seen in this country made into ash trays. Big, heavy, silver anklets. I couldn't see how they could have walked all the way from their villages in with these things, without having injured their ankles.

Bingham: We got to a point where Marian was examining the finest of the inlays, because the decorations on this fort were just beautiful. Carvings and the inlays of semi-precious stones. Similar to the Taj Mahal.

Two old men came, one of them had a long loaf of bread under his arm--they came and they were staring at Marian's legs because she had on a short khaki skirt and her sandals, and of course, no stockings on in that heat. Their ladies, we were surprised to find, had little short blouses that left their waists bare from above their saris, but they didn't see very many women with legs bare. So they were standing there and I took their picture. It always gets a good laugh when I show that picture.

We had time to go to Agra and Marian got sick there. We left her in the room for a while. When I came back, there was a snake charmer at the gate not far from our rooms, with his snake in a basket, tweeting a little flute. He just had two or three or four notes that he played on and on and on. Marian said, "If he plays much longer, I'm just going to go wild."

So I went to the desk of the hotel and I said, "Is there any way you could ask that man to sit outside of the gate instead of so close to the rooms?" They were very kind, and they did do that. That helped a lot. I can just imagine having a fever and hearing this flute playing so monotonously.

We went from India to Bangkok. I found, while we were in India, that a trip to Indonesia was possible, which hadn't been the case when we had planned the trip originally, because there had been a lot of trouble in Indonesia over Sukharno. So we got in touch with some American friends back in California, and through them, were able to meet Professor Mears, the man who, with his wife, had a house there and would take house guests. He very kindly met our plane and helped us through customs. Also, there was a Ford Foundation couple with a new building where they were supposed to take paying guests and where we stayed on our return from Bali. So we found it possible to go over to Indonesia, Marian and I.

Between the time when they'd agreed to take us and the time we arrived, Professor Mears' wife had become critically ill in the United States. She'd come to take care of her mother but they found that she was very ill. We stayed there in spite of that, because he insisted that it was quite all right.

There was an Indonesian man who came to the door with different kinds of bronze bowls, old ones I think, and I was able to get one of those. It's one of the choice things I like having now. When we went to the museum later, I saw an identical one there. Whether this is an exact copy or not, I don't know, but at least it's very enjoyable to own it.

Bingham: Mr. Mears was very kind to us and we kept in touch with him for some little time. We have mutual friends in Piedmont. His wife did die finally, and he married again several years later. A very nice lady, Virginia, who we met in 1970 in Hong Kong when they dined with us.

Woodbridge had been to Indonesia in 1955 and didn't want to go. He wanted to get on to Hong Kong to do some work at the university there. So I took Marian and we went to Djakarta and to Bali where we stayed as paying guests with Mr. Pandey at his lovely place at Sanur Beach.

Then from Indonesia we went to Bangkok and saw our friends, Professor B.J. and Albert Pickerell from the university here in Berkeley. They were very kind to us. We were privileged to see a May first celebration at the Jade Buddha temple. It was a full moonlight evening and we planned to arrive there quite early and watched the people assemble.

The Thai people had on their best clothes and looked handsome. The women had flowers in their hair, and they sat down on the marble walks around the temple court, each carrying a small bunch of flowers with two slender incense sticks protruding from the center of the bunch. Crowds of them just came and sat there. Then finally the official party came. Priests and I guess it must have been government officials, marched in a space close to the temple several times, and went into the temple finally. The people then arose and did likewise.

There was a great big bronze bowl where they put their lighted incense sticks. Flowers were everywhere. Very fragrant, lovely--I forget what they're called--some type of lily, I think. There was a certain amount of music during this time. It was one of those beautiful memories I have of something very special, thanks to the Pickerells who knew about this event.

Levenson: It sounds wonderful.

Bingham: We went with them on a trip up to Aiyudia. We drove up there. This had been a very ancient city. Unfortunately, many of the old pagoda-like structures had been let go. Evidently they built a new one but they didn't keep up the old one. Very strange customs.

After we looked around a bit, he hired a little launch and to start the engine, one of the men who was running the boat, lit a blow torch and faced it toward the engine to heat it up to get it started. I was sure that we were going to explode. [laughter] But it all worked out.

The Pickerells had a little son about two years old at that time. He was a cute little fellow and awfully good. We had a beautiful ride up the river, past temples, and stopped to look around at only one or two, because we didn't have much time.

Bingham: It was a wonderful day's journey. We enjoyed that. When we returned to the car, there several men with heads of small statues for sale. We left without buying any. What a pity to spoil things that way!

A Winter in Hong Kong, 1970-1971: More Volunteer Work

Bingham: In 1970-1971, we were in Hong Kong for the winter. Woodbridge went out ahead of me, because I was trying to have some work done on the house in the East that I'd inherited. So he was there a month before I came. We stayed at Robert Black Hall, a large, picturesque building where they housed guests and some graduate students on the campus at the University of Hong Kong. It was a Chinese style building, all made of cement, and yet quite attractive. We had our meals there too.

Well, I came from a busy, busy, busy life to something where there wasn't any demand on my time, and I thought I'd do some writing. Every time I sat down to write, whether it was in our room or in the lounge-library part of the building, it seemed some cleaning person would come and be bustling around, which was very distracting, so I really didn't do much writing there. I wanted to start on this biography.

Finally what I did was to go downtown and over to the Welfare Industry store in Kowloon, which was a nice little shop, where they sold things that were made by refugees. Missionaries had taught them what to make and how to do the things which would attract tourist shoppers. There were all kinds of gift objects, paintings, and scrolls, pewter dishes with decorated ceramic linings, decorated cardigans, et cetera. They said they didn't need anybody else in their store but to go to the Princess Building in Hong Kong and see if the store there could use me. So I went to the Princess Building and to the little shop there. The English ladies who were managing it said, "Oh well, if you want to, you can come when the Chinese girl goes out for lunch," in a very condescending way. So I did that, and enjoyed working there, although never did they introduce me to anybody, even to each other. And they didn't talk to me much.

But I was fascinated by the people who came to buy. First there'd be a whole tour of French people. You could just know they were French. Their smartly-dressed hands were gesturing and their tongues were going, and they were flying around. Then there'd be some Dutch ladies with big thick coats on and little fur hats, and they were quite portly. They would be very careful handling things. It was a whole different crowd each day, almost.

Bingham: We sold quite a few things, all the way from toy camels to ashtrays and dishes, and clothing--little garments for children or for older people. It was quite a wide selection, but well designed by whoever had taken into account what people would want to buy as well as what they could teach people to make.

Lovely little boxes for jewelry or printed-fabric desk sets. Two ends padded to hold the blotter down. And a little paper holder and pencil box. They had carved ivory things which now we can't bring into this country. Also tiny white-shell salt and pepper spoons and larger paper knives and teaspoons.

But it was touching to see the people who came and enjoyed getting these things to take home for their friends. We also could have anything mailed.

One day I waited on a lady who ran a gift shop in the Middle West, and she bought countless pretty ashtrays to be sent home. She had wanted to get some for her shop. The shop also had silk-lined fine wool cardigans; some were embroidered.

That was two days a week I did that, I think. I also went over to the American Welfare Industries, which was like the British one. There, they welcomed me. There was a Chinese girl I worked with; she was really the head of the shop. I was awfully glad that she stayed while I was there, because I couldn't always answer the questions that needed to be answered.

They had very similar things. And so on Saturday mornings, some of the people who worked during the week days would come to that shop; people who lived in Hong Kong or Kowloon. One day a nice young man and his wife came in. He was a soldier of our army in Korea at that time, and they wanted to get Christmas gifts to send home. So I told them about what the shop did; that it was a welfare enterprise; that people were being helped who came as refugees to Hong Kong, as well as some of the very poor people in Hong Kong.

He bought quite a lot of things to be sent. Then the Chinese girl was the one who would wrap them up and get them off at times when there were no people in the shop.

I enjoyed that experience. But I couldn't get over the British people, because really, they were most casual and not at all friendly. It seemed to me it would have taken little trouble to have been a little courteous and thoughtful. Their friends would come and they'd introduce them to their English friends but not to me. Seemed a strange situation.

The only other thing that I remembered, unfortunately, was the time that we were invited to the Vice-Chancellor's cocktail party in the spring, at their university residence, and the same thing

Bingham: happened there. The Vice-Chancellor is equivalent to our university president. We came into the room full of people. We saw about six American friends and went and talked with them, and our host and hostess greeted us, but never did they introduce us to anybody.

Levenson: What!

Bingham: So I thought, well, perhaps this is a British custom that they know each other, and maybe they just-- I finally asked about it, and it seemed that it was felt that anyone who had been invited could just go over and speak to anybody there, because anybody who was invited, was interesting enough for any guests to speak to. So I was no longer so shy about it after that.

I'm sure they didn't mean any ill by it. It was just that it was a different custom.

Levenson: Very bad manners, I think.

Bingham: It wasn't the way we were brought up to do in this country; it wasn't probably in your home.

Hong Kong was a fascinating place to be. But the smog was so bad, I found I couldn't go down there in the afternoon because it got so thick in the streets that it made my eyes feel very irritated. I used to go down in the morning if I had shopping to do. There were fewer people and many fewer vehicles. And by then, there hadn't been this accumulation of bad air.

We would go to church on Sunday at the Episcopal cathedral. We met a few people there, including a very nice English couple. He was a visiting professor from Liverpool, England. They brought professors from England to examine the students who were working in different departments who wanted to earn degrees. These professors from England were impartial characters, you see, so that it would be a fair examination. We met some interesting people there, but we never got to know any of them well except one couple who stayed almost as long as we did at the hostel, Professor and Mrs. Geoffrey Walker.

We went together to Macao once, but we all got sick, unfortunately. Something in the food, I guess. We have kept in touch with them ever since and went to visit them in England once. They were then living in a darling little house in the Worrall district near Liverpool. They took us to sightsee in Liverpool and to luncheon at a charming little restaurant in the country. We stayed at an inn, formerly a large residence. We had a very good time with them. They've been to Berkeley quite a few times. He was in the physics department, chairman at one time, for the University of Liverpool. They have visited a friend of mine here. So these contacts really are very precious.

Levenson: I think you're wonderful the way you keep up with people; it's really good.

Bingham: Well, it's really quite fascinating. When I was looking over our Christmas list several years ago, I realized we had many countries represented to which we sent Christmas cards to people we'd met over the years. It's been most rewarding, because if we returned to some of these countries, people were so friendly. Some have visited or looked us up here. A few have been former students of Woodbridge's. Michael and Mathaung Blackmore, for instance. He is English. She was Burmese and a very bright scholar.

A Trip to Russia, 1974

Bingham: In 1974, Woodbridge took me on a trip to the Soviet Union. We went to Vienna to start out with and stayed about a week or ten days there. Then we started off for Kiev in a plane. As you looked down from the plane, in Austria you saw lots of automobiles and trucks on the road. Suddenly, when you got to the border, there were much smaller roads and no vehicles, no private vehicles whatsoever, and practically no vehicles; just a few carts and horses.

Kiev was a beautiful small city on the Dnieper River. The hotel, on a spacious square, was large and comfortable. We attended a concert of marvelous male cossacks in costume. And, of course, went sight-seeing during our days there. From Kiev, we took another plane up to Moscow and arrived there just before President Nixon was going to arrive, so the avenue into Moscow was all cleared and there were soldiers every here and there along the way and glags out. So it felt very gala, because here we were driving in this car with all these guards and these beautiful flags flying. I was impressed with how flat the country was and how many birch trees and pine trees there were. The forest wasn't variegated like it is in our country. It was mostly these two kinds of trees.

In Moscow, we stayed in a huge hotel. It took up the whole block. Very near to the wonderful St. Basil's church, which was a most intriguing and beautiful little church.

Next morning we went to the Intourist Agency to see if we could change part of the trip that Woodbridge had planned so carefully with our tourist people in Berkeley, because they wanted to keep us just two days in Samarkand and Woodbridge wanted so spend more time there, and also to go to one or two other places that they didn't include. They put us up for Vladimir, and he didn't think we wanted to go to Vladimir. So he tried to get them to change our schedule a bit.

Bingham: They said they couldn't do it there. We'd have to do it when we reached Alma Ata. So we went along with our trip. We had an interesting time in Moscow. I won't go into all the details, but we went to see the Kremlin. That was with a tour group that they planned. Then another time they said, "Oh, you can just come again; just walk around the place, inside the Kremlin." We enjoyed this walk, including a beautiful view of the city.

So Woodbridge and I went one lovely afternoon. We found a garden full of great big chrysanthemums and other beautiful flowers. We also were able to take a lot of pictures, which I have on slides. And we had a chance to go in the cathedrals there. I found this tremendously exciting.

We went shopping one day in the big GOM department store, because Woodbridge's suitcase fell apart, and found that they had a very different way of shopping than we do. In the first place, we had to go to the second floor to find the suitcase shop. They had quite a stock there, but there was a cart coming with a whole lot of new ones, and a whole line of people behind the cart because they don't have enough to supply people with everything they need. So these people wanted to be sure that they were going to get what they wanted, so they followed the cart with the new suitcases. You told the salesperson which one you wanted in which ever part of the store, whether it was a suitcase or some grocery item; then you had to go to a cashier and pay with a little piece of paper that showed how much you needed to pay. And then you had to go back to the salesman and get your article.

Each time, of course, you had to stand in a line. Most inconvenient kind of shopping you can imagine. Even when you wanted just a few cookies, you had to do this system of picking out what you wanted and then getting a ticket, pay the cashier, and then coming back again and waiting in these three lines.

We took the plane after our stay in Moscow and went to Alma Ata, which is way, almost to China, way in the east of the Soviet Union. We stayed at Alma Ata several days. One day we walked, just the two of us, to an anthropological museum which had costumes and implements that people used. The amazing thing was to find this city at the edge of the desert and near China--they had buses, they had multiple-storey buildings, a department store, and all kinds of other modern conveniences.

We visited the open market in Alma Ata. There were piles of vegetables, even tiny strawberries, on long tables, and a few of the people who still wore costumes were there. The women had many skirts on, full skirts, which were very colorful. And little blouses. Then they wore a bandana on their heads, tied under their chin. I don't remember that the men's costumes were anything interesting at all.

Bingham: We also saw an old mosque there that was in rather poor condition.

But the thing that our little tourist guide most wanted us to see was an ice rink. She took us up a valley and here they had an Olympic-size ice rink built upon what really is an earthquake fault. We wondered about this. What would happen to it in an earthquake? But they were very proud of this, because they were going to have some big exhibition there. We went on some nice walks around the town so that we saw what it was really like there. Quite hilly because the T'ien Shan mountains were beyond the foothills we could see.

We went to Frunze by plane. The airplanes were Aeroflot and they were all reasonably comfortable, but we felt quite cramped, because the Russian people, most of them, are rather short and stocky, and they weren't used to these tall, long-legged Americans. When we got to the airports, they always made us get on the plane first. Sometimes I felt very self-conscious about this because here we were in their country, and yet we were given the opportunity to choose the seat first. But the people didn't seem to mind.

Oh, I must tell you about Frunze a little bit, because that was a wonderful place. At Frunze we stayed in a nice hotel. There was a great big group of tourists that arrived by bus. They were people from East Germany. They were supposed, all of them, to sit at a certain table, but they couldn't all fit in, so they put one couple at the table with us. It was a young couple. We couldn't talk to them very well because they only spoke German. Woodbridge spoke a little German but not fluently. I knew almost none at all. I just knew French. Somehow we communicated a bit, and that tour group kept meeting us for the next two or three cities we visited.

Finally, I asked the lady if I could send her a letter sometime, when we were going to be leaving them, because they were going to another town where we were not going. She said, "Well, I'll talk to you about that another time." So, another time I was buying some postcards in the lobby of the hotel, in Bokhara. She came up to me and said, "Isn't this a pretty picture?" and then turned the card over to show where she put her address! On the back of the card; then she gave me the card.

We went for a walk that evening, outside of the hotel, and they brought another young man along. They told us they were allowed to travel only within the Soviet Union states. They couldn't go to outside countries and were very distressed about this. So I said, "Well, never mind, the day will come when you'll be able to do it. Just be patient." Because I felt sure that someday this would change. She was such a nice lady, and we enjoyed her husband.

Bingham: The young man who was with them was a very unhappy person. He had resented terribly this business of being so limited in his thinking and his talking and his life, whereas the married couple seemed to have adjusted to it much better. But we tried to talk to them and give them some hope about their future.

For several years I did get a Christmas card from her. It just gave a name; she wrote no message, there was just the printed message and her name. I'll have to try to pick it up again this year, because for the last two years, we haven't sent cards.

After the meal in Frunze, we went outside, as we often did, to walk, and we found that there was a railroad station across the little plaza where the hotel was located. Beside the railroad station, there was a very wide bridge that went over the railroad tracks. We walked up onto that bridge and from there we could look at this tremendous long line of the Heavenly Range, the T'ien Shan, which extended from east to west as far as we could see.

There were some very high peaks far in the background. They didn't look particularly high, as happens when you look at mountains from a distance. But one of them was some very high peak, toward the Himalayas. It was a very beautiful spot. We walked up on that bridge several times.

Another day, we were driven out to the tomb of a famous writer. It was interesting to see the countryside, productive agricultural country, thanks to irrigation.

From Frunze we went to Tashkent. The hotel was large but not very good. There, they'd had a very bad earthquake a few years previously. One evening we attended a ballet performance. It was beautiful and the dancers were very skilled. They had called on groups from various cities to come and rebuild the city. They would show us the Moscow buildings or Kiev buildings or whatever buildings that groups from various cities had built. There was some slight difference between them, but pretty much they were standard buildings; not very interesting. One wondered whether this had been a voluntary project.

There was one choice little mosque that was very pretty, with tile decoration. But very small compared to the ones we'd seen in Istanbul. From Tashkent we went to Bokhara and Samarkand. It seemed so exciting to go to these places because I used to hear about Samarkand and Bokhara, but it was people who'd pay to go by camelback or who had a very hard trip getting there, and never did I dream I would get there.

Bingham: I must admit that when we were in Vienna, we were near the cathedral there--I went into the cathedral just before we left for Moscow and just sat there and thought let's pray for the fact that we have a good trip, because I didn't know what the Soviet Union would offer us in the way of hazards. So I sat there looking at the cathedral building and trying to think of what strength I could have to go through with this trip, because really, I was quite scared about it.

But it turned out to be quite comfortable on the whole. We only had a few uncomfortable experiences. One of them I remember so distinctly. I think it was at Tashkent, we got into the airplane and they took us out into the middle of the field--and it was a roasting hot day--there was no air conditioning and they opened nothing, and the plane was full of people. It got to be so close I thought I'd just burst if they didn't open something soon.

Fortunately, it didn't last more than about half an hour, but that was plenty. Then we flew over the desert, which looked just like a rumpled piece of cloth below us. I imagined desert with big sand dunes, but there were none of those. It was hard-looking earth, but it had just been packed down somehow. There were no plants whatsoever. You couldn't see rocks. You just saw this rumply-looking earth below you with no vegetation.

We didn't fly as high as the planes do over here, because they weren't as big planes as ours. But they were quite good planes. When they ever served any food, it was interesting. I don't remember exactly what they served us, but I know it was all quite edible and tasty.

On that trip, there was a mother with two children across the aisle from me, and her husband. The husband paid absolutely no attention to the children. One of them was quite mischievous and the other one was a very quiet little child. So I started to draw stick figures and showed it to them across the aisle. Then the little girl, who was quiet, came over and sat in my lap and I drew more pictures for her. Shortly the whole plane began to be interested. And I had a wonderful time. I couldn't talk with them, of course, but it just seemed as though it was very nice to have that small, friendly relationship. I drew rabbits, mice, and cats.

Let's see, we wanted to go to Kiva, an ancient, historic, uninhabited town. So what did they do but send us all the way back to Tashkent, and we waited in that airport all day long before we finally got a plane out to go to Urgench where we stayed in a very simple hotel and from there drove to Kiva with a lovely blonde guide named Evelyn, who wore a light lavender dress. We got there at sunset. Unfortunately, we couldn't see very much of the very old city, because it got so dark. I was able to take a few pictures, but they're not very good.

Bingham: It was a strange city in its day. I would have to look up the history of it. But it was a wonderful experience to have seen this place. Little narrow streets and a big wall around the town. The hotel where we stayed was not right in Kiva; it was in an adjacent town, at Urgench.

We had dinner out under an arbor. It was very hot still. The main thing we could eat was rice. It was a season when they had tomatoes and cucumbers. It seemed to me they'd ripened very early. But we weren't eating raw vegetables because we didn't feel they'd been carefully prepared, or we didn't want to risk the fact that they might not be safe to eat.

I hope someday somebody can tell me more about Kiva, or that I can see better pictures, because it was too bad to see it in that bad light.

Then we returned to Moscow directly from there for a few more days. We took a train to go up to Leningrad. The train trip was quite an experience. Again, the heat and the open windows and the dirt flying in. But we'd stop at some little villages here and there. The most sad-looking, black-clad peasant women and men would come to the station to meet someone. I suddenly realized that in the cities we hadn't seen any of this. It was all quite glamorous in Moscow in comparison. The young people were wearing clothes much like what we were wearing in America at that time. But here in the country, they still were wearing their black clothes and probably living very, very simple lives.

I had taken one drive in Moscow. Woodbridge couldn't go that day, because he'd been trying to arrange for this change of trip. He said, "You go on anyway." I took this very nice lady guide out to the palace of Prince Yousopoff who had been one of the imperial family. It was a small palace outside of town with a big garden and grounds around it. She took me through the palace and told me about some of the parties that they'd had.

Evidently, Prince Yousopoff had enjoyed the theater very much, so he had planned that they would have outdoor plays in a colonnade around a courtyard. There were some beautiful objects and furniture in the palace.

Well, when I got home to America again, somebody said to me, "Did you see the hospitals there?" And I said no, I only saw a beautiful little mosque that was over on one edge of the property right next to the Moscow River, which was very narrow up there. Later of course, when it goes through Moscow, it is very wide.

Bingham: Then, as I say, we took the train to go up to Leningrad. At Leningrad we stayed in a very modern hotel, not far from the island where there's a beautiful little Christian church in a former fortress where there were barracks. And an old ship was anchored. I forget what the importance of it was. There was a great history about that ship.

This is where I miss having Woodbridge in on this conversation, because he remembers all these historical things and makes it much more interesting than I can.

Levenson: You do the people.

Bingham: I do the people, yes. I love taking pictures of people, too. This fascinated me because it was something alive.

We visited the church and the fort and the quarters where the soldiers had lived. One evening Woodbridge said, "Now tomorrow morning I'm going to get up at five o'clock to see the ships." It seems that every morning at five o'clock, they open all the bridges so the big ships can go through the many canals and lakes that have been joined in the city of Leningrad. It's almost like a Venice in a way. But these modern bridges all opened up. So he saw the ships passing through; I didn't. I'm just too lazy, I guess.

It was the time of year when the sun shone most all day, and most of the night too. It was very light at five o'clock in the morning. We went to see a church which was a Greek Orthodox church, one Sunday, with our guide. There were a lot of people there, worshipping. There was a funeral service being conducted in one side chapel and a regular church service in the main one.

It was interesting to us to see how many people there were there. They'd come in and go up to one of the photographs of the Virgin Mary and they'd kiss the photograph; then they'd say prayers. They stood throughout the services. There were no seats at all.

We visited the Winter Palace, a beautiful museum. It was a thrill to see all the marvelous paintings and the magnificence of the building.

Levenson: Do you mean the Hermitage?

Bingham: Hermitage, yes. I think I'm correct in saying it used to be called the Winter Palace, didn't it? The royal family had a summer residence outside of town.

Levenson: The Peterhof.

Bingham: Then we took a plane to go to Sweden. When we got to the airport, they examined our baggage very carefully. There was one young man who looked rather untidy, and he had a suitcase with his things thrown into it; not neatly packed. They made him take absolutely everything out and unfold his clothing. I suppose they were looking for dope.

There were a number of soldiers around the airport too, keeping guard. We got on the plane and suddenly we found ourselves heaving a sigh of relief. Without thinking much about it, we never felt as though we were completely alone. We always wondered if there was some hidden mechanism to record what we were talking about. Evidently, no place did we encounter that at all.

In fact, we practically didn't have to lock our suitcases when we traveled. Just as in China you don't have to lock your suitcases. Nobody would dare to steal because the punishments are so severe that they wouldn't want to get caught.

But I look back at that Russian trip as really a very choice experience.

In Sweden we stayed at a hotel that was very near the museum. At the time we were there, the king's wonderful Chinese things were being exhibited which later went touring this country. It happened that we knew the curator who had been here in San Francisco. He was very kind and gave us permission to come anytime we wanted to from a certain time early in the morning until late in the afternoon and thus avoid the tourist crowds. So we went three or four times, and felt so fortunate, because that doesn't often happen. The king had collected gems of Chinese art.

We also took several meals out from our hotel in little restaurants. One day a friend of my sister's, who lived out in the country, got in touch with us and invited us to come for lunch. So we went out to her place in a little electric train. She met us at the station and took us to this darling farm house that she and her husband had. Her husband had died several years before. She had her daughter there for lunch with us.

They took us in a motor boat for a short trip through islands around in the Baltic right next to Sweden. It was a wonderful experience. It was a beautiful sunny day with a crisp breeze going. After the heat of the latter part of Russia, we were much relieved and delighted to have a change, but had to wear our warmest clothing.

We had lunch in their little house which was just as sweet as you could imagine. She had done embroidery, of course, so there were very pretty things around. They were very cordial.

Bingham: We then went back into town and went to a park where there was a celebration and joined the crowds. After several days there, we took a flight to England and spent a few days in London. By then we'd both caught a cold, so we really didn't do very much in London. But it was a great trip.

Then back to our own country and the Connecticut landscapes. I think of all the experiences we've been so fortunate to have. Even though I can't take trips now, there's a lot to think about and read about, because I can catch up on some that I did not have time to do before.

Back to China with Jack and Caroline Service, 1980

Bingham: In 1980 I went back to China. It was very interesting because Woodbridge did not want to go back. He said his China was gone. I didn't like to be saying something different, but I did say that I would love to go back. And my friends knew this.

One day a pamphlet came from the National Committee on United States-China Relations and suggested three different trips. Woodbridge looked at me and said, "I think you should take one of these trips." I said, "Well, let me think it over, because I really don't want to go unless I know somebody on the trip." So I waited until the next day to make the decision. The very next morning, a friend of mine in San Francisco, Mrs. Richard Adloff, called up and said, "We're planning a trip to China for a small group, and we'd like to know if you'd like to join us, because I know you said you wanted to go."

So I said, "Yes. I'd love to go with you." Then I asked her who was going along, and she told me the other people. I realized there were three single gentlemen who would be going, so I said, "I think I'd like to ask a friend so I could share a room with her," because it would make it a little less expensive for one thing, but also it would be much more companionable. She said that would be all right. I told her who I was going to ask and she didn't know Mrs. Warren Olney III, but Elizabeth Olney and she got along very nicely. I had the Adloffs together for tea one day so that they could meet and discuss going to China.

Elizabeth and I used to go to the San Francisco Symphony concerts together at that time, on Thursday afternoons. She and her husband were among the first people we'd ever entertained in Berkeley in 1931. Elizabeth and I had talked about trips because I knew her husband and she had taken some wonderful trips. He died about a year before this trip came up. I had asked her where she was going to go next because I wanted to encourage her to keep going on trips.

Bingham: She said she was not sure where she was going, but she would like to go on a trip. So when I was asked to go, I thought immediately of her although there were other people I might have asked, because I knew she was a good traveler and that she wanted to go on a trip. She was delighted to be asked and we had a wonderful time together.

Levenson: Who was leading the trip?

Bingham: The people who had organized the trip were Mr. and Mrs. Richard Adloff. They asked Jack Service and his wife Caroline to be the leaders. Jack was really the leader. They had been in China before; in fact, Jack was born in Chengtu, of missionary parents. Jack was able to plan wonderful experiences for us which the International Travel Service in Peking cooperated in arranging, because he was acquainted with some of the Chinese people who we met.

Our party consisted of Virginia and Richard Adloff; Virginia's nephew, Hugh Thompson; Caroline and John Service, Ginny and Easton Rothwell, Elizabeth Olney, Thomas Blaisdell and his brother, William; Andrew Jameson, and me. We turned out to be a very congenial group!

Mrs. Olney had known the Rothwells well, so that was a nice link for her. We were twelve, a perfect number for the little Toyota bus in which we were driven at each place we visited.

We started off in San Francisco on April 12, 1980 and flew to Tokyo, to the new Narita airport where there'd been such a lot of trouble with the farmers whose land had been used for the airport. As we landed, we could see there had been bunkers and places for military men to live out at the airport. However, everything was quiet at the time we landed.

We did have a really difficult landing for the pilots because it was extremeley foggy. When we got through this thick fog and were actually on the ground, everybody clapped. We were put up at the airport hotel overnight and it was very comfortable. We had dinner together. The food was American.

The next morning, quite early, we started off for Peking. We flew in a China Airlines plane, as I remember it; flew over to Shanghai. It seemed a very circuitous route to me, but it was interesting over the Inland Sea which I'd known, of course, years before, from the ground. It was lovely to fly over the islands in the Inland Sea of Japan. Then we flew over Shanghai and turned north to Peking, arriving late in the afternoon. Mr. Yang, our tour guide who stayed with us all the time, met us there. We went by bus into the city, the highway now lined with beautiful rows of big trees. We were lucky. We were always comfortable in a little

Bingham: Toyota bus at each place where we stopped. I was amazed at all the Western-type apartment houses newly built along that highway near town. Then to see that the big city wall had been eliminated! We went to the Peking Hotel, which I had always considered a very beautiful, nice place to stay. It had been greatly enlarged since 1937.

Jack Service handed out slips in the lobby to tell us which room we were going to go to. We were all up on about the tenth to the fourteenth floors, so we had beautiful views. Each room in every hotel had a large thermos of hot water, tea, and two cups. When Elizabeth and I opened the door to our room on the fourteenth floor, here was the Forbidden City lying right in our view at the foot of the building practically! We were quite popular; everybody wanted to come and take pictures from our little balcony.

Levenson: Weren't you lucky.

Bingham: We arranged to have an informal cocktail party in our room. Everybody brought something, because we all did it that way during the trip. If we had a little party, everybody helped out.

This new highrise addition to the Peking Hotel made me think a little bit of the Russian hotels we'd been to in Russia, Woodbridge and I. When you come out of the elevators, there was a desk and always somebody in attendance. In China there was a young man who would watch who came and where they went, to check on the fact that they didn't go to other people's rooms, or that nobody was taking things out that they shouldn't. At this desk one could order bottled water.

First we met briefly in the Adloffs' room to discuss the plans for our sightseeing in Peking. We started off the very next day and visited a Chinese arts and crafts factory, outside of which was a heap of very large chunks of light-green jade, almost white. There we saw people, men and girls; most were young but some few older ones who probably had to help to teach the younger ones how to do these arts and crafts.

The first room we went into was one where they were carving jade and coral. One old man had a big pice of coral the shape of a large branch; he said he'd been working on it for two years. It was very intricately decorated.

Then we went upstairs to a number of different floors and saw people in the process of copying old Chinese paintings and making cloisonne, which was very much more complicated to make than I'd ever realized. They had little tiny pieces of flat copper wire bent to outline flowers or the design desired that they would cement onto the vase or urn or whatever they were going to decorate. This

Bingham: was one process. This would be baked so the little copper pieces would adhere to the vase. Then they would give it to another table where they filled all those spaces with enamels of different colors. You've probably seen some objects of this kind. They have birds and flowers and many other beautiful designs. They were doing such fine work; it seemed to me just about as good as what they used to do before the revolution.

They didn't do embroidery there. In Peking it was mostly making beads and necklaces and earrings and things like that on the jewelry floor. And then there were pottery things on still another floor. Vases and little statues such as you can buy in Chinatown. Also little figures of Kuan Yin or children or fishermen that you put in a miniature garden. So there was a great variety of handicrafts being made.

Before leaving, we went to a little shop in the same building and some of us bought a few things. The people all seemed very friendly where we went. I was quite surprised, you know, to see that we were greeted with such pleasant faces and evidently friendly attitude, because the Communist government had for so many years taught the people to hate America. But now the Chinese want American dollars and business. I thought maybe we'd be subject to some unpleasantness. I don't think that happened anywhere we were, even when we were out in the country meeting people just very casually.

After that we went to the Temple of Heaven. Quite late in the day, we went outside the city proper to the Temple of Heaven and the Altar of Heaven. I had remembered them from years ago. It was very different now. The ground was all trodden down and there were no more grass lawns, no more carpets of violet plants under the trees, the big cedar trees. The buildings and structures were about the same. It was quite exciting to be back there near that beautiful big blue roof of the Temple of Heaven, even though it was such cold weather.

We walked around quite a bit there and ended up at one of the side buildings where they had again a shop with all kinds of arts and crafts. Mr. and Mrs. Adloff bought a beautiful jade tree, all different colors of stones on it. I ordered a seal because we'd had someone break into our house and they'd taken my seal. Fortunately, I had brought along the characters for my name, and so the man said he'd get it to me before I left.

They're so skillful. I was always amazed how well organized their businesses were, so that if I ordered a seal I would get it before I left. After that we went back to the hotel and had dinner. Our meals were in a big dining room and we sat at one of two tables that were allotted to us and we had delicious Chinese food. This continued throughout our trip. In fact, we had many of the same dishes over again in different places.

Bingham: One day I said to our guide, "You must have a wonderful cooking school here for the men who do the cooking for these hotels and trips which we take." I didn't get an answer, but I'm sure that must have been the case. It included, at one point, some ferns that we ate. I'd never had that in this country. Maybe they don't know about it, or maybe there are none grown here in adequate quantity for the quantity they would need. But the ferns were very good. Sea slugs were not!

For breakfast, we had just about the same thing every day that we would have at home, and it was very palatable. The coffee was good and we found that at lunch and dinner, we had bottles of either soda or beer on the table. Although I'm not a beer drinker ordinarily, I like the beer; it was very mild. So most of us had beer because the orange soda was pretty sweet.

The next day we drove up to the Great Wall and the Ming Tombs. Again in our little bus, leaving promptly at 8:30 in the morning; so we had to hustle through breakfast and get down to the bus in time.

Jack was very careful to make us all feel that we must be prompt, both to meals and to go off on trips, so we really would rush to get ready. We drove out through the town and were impressed by the numbers of people, hundreds and hundreds of people, on bicycles, going to work. Going by some places where they had bicycle parking lots with usually an old woman in charge who would give each person a little ticket as she put part of it on the bicycle, made us wonder how they'd ever find their bicycle again.

The fields were just beginning to have green in them from the plants that had been put in. It was fun to see the different size of the plants as we traveled further south.

Peking--my first impression was that it was just the same as when we left. This gray, overall smoggy air, with the strong smell of coal smoke, because there's a great deal of coal used for cooking and for heating. They take the coal powder and make it into coal balls by adding mud to it, I'm told, and that makes a hotter fire.

Levenson: What month was this?

Bingham: It was in April. A lot of work had been done on the Great Wall since I was there, back in the 1930s, I guess it was. They had repaved it so that it was comfortable to walk on. It wasn't so rough. To the point where some of the paving going up the steep parts was so slippery that they had installed pipe railings on the sides so that you could pull yourself up. I didn't go up awfully far because I was tired and I had on a lot of clothing. I knew it was going to be cold and windy there.

Bingham: We went down to a little building at the foot of the steps to the top of the wall where we had lunch, a very nice lunch, served to us. I don't know where the food was prepared; I suppose somewhere nearby. Not as hot and fancy as at the hotel, of course, but very, very adequate. We saw masses of buses in the parking lots. They had two or three big parking lots there for the tourists that came. There were many Chinese people, too, walking up on the wall. And even little children, of whom I took some good pictures, on slides.

At one point, they had a camel that you could pay to get up on and have your picture taken. At another place, a donkey that you could get up on and have your picture taken. We didn't do that, but there were lots of people who did.

We then drove to the Ming Tombs. We stopped on the way to see some of the different ends of the Great Wall, because at one period there must have been several what I would have called layers or series of walls, so that if the invaders came over one part of the Great Wall, they'd still have some others to get past. Most of those others have been destroyed in part. There was one place where there was quite a beautiful carved gate built over the old road to a main entrance through the wall located near the parking lots, and it was next to a very small village. When we got out to look around, the people came out of the village to look at us.

We reached the plain where the Ming Tombs are situated at the foot of encircling hills, and went driving down the approach where there were the stone animals that people often photograph. Then into an enclosure where they had turned a few buildings into museums containing some of the royal treasure that had been in the tombs, like a regal gold crown and very fine ornaments.

Then we went up and over through an archway, which was the formal entrance to the tomb and down a sloped incline to the entrance into the tomb, and it was practically empty, as I remember, but really very spacious. Several chambers beside the big main chamber, which I presume was the chamber where the emperor and empress were buried. In the antechambers, some of their servants or family must have been buried.

Finally we went back to the Peking Hotel at the end of the day and were glad to have a short rest. It was quite a strenuous day. Partly because it was so cold and we had not been in such cold weather for some time, and partly because we'd already had one quite strenuous day of sightseeing.

One of the evenings that we were there, we went to a theater to see a whole series of little acts. It was quite diverting. We thought it was great fun. The theater was in the area which used to be outside the city wall (now gone). Only the big buildings at what were gates remain.

Levenson: It must have been wonderful to have as knowledgeable a leader as Jack Service.

Bingham: Oh yes, he was able to tell us a good deal. And Mr. Yang, our tour guide was also very knowledgeable and helpful. Beside that, I should mention that we had local guides in each area we visited to help tell us exactly what we were to see. We were always given a chance, when we first arrived, to meet in one of our rooms, often it was the Adloffs' room, to go over our schedule for each day and to suggest any changes we might like. After that session, we weren't supposed to suggest changes. I thought that was a pretty good idea. I don't think we ever made many changes. Jack, who was the group spokesman, had a few good suggestions here and there.

One day, in Peking, I took a walk in the afternoon by myself. Part of the group had gone to Yenching and some of them to a ballet school.

One of the first evenings, actually, we went to a Chinese restaurant that wasn't very far away from the hotel, so we walked there, up what used to be called Morrison Street. At one wall was a frame where newspapers were posted and a crowd stood to read the days' news. The crowds in China are something that everyone remarks on, because the streets were crowded at all hours of the day. Many of them wore Mao-grey colored jackets and dark trousers. The children wore bright little floral colored jackets or gaily colored clothes. Some of the women wore lighter colored jackets, sometimes patterned. But all the crowd looked rather quietly clad.

I didn't see any of the children with the kind of hairdos that we used to see, bound up with bright wool. The mothers would take little pieces of hair on the sides of their head, usually, and wind it tight with bright wool, which made it stick out. It was really very cute on these little children. I didn't see any of those this time. They had hats or caps or little tam o-shanters.

Another night we went to a duck restaurant. That was a different restaurant, and we had Peking duck, which is always such a treat. Usually it was the last night we were in a town, when one of the heads or a representative of the head of the China International Travel Service would give us a dinner, really a banquet. At the very end of the trip, we tried to give a dinner for our nice Mr. Yang because we liked him so much; he came along all the way with us. But he would not agree to this idea.

The last day in Peking, we went sightseeing in the morning, and then in the afternoon, we all had to go out to Liu li ch'ang, which had been a wonderful market area when I'd been there before, in the 1930s. The place where you could find small antique things

Bingham: and pretty buckles or pins or necklaces. Now it was really quite dreary, and the air began to get very cloudy and yellow. I said, "Oh, I'm afraid we're going to get a dust storm," because it was April and that's when they used to come. Sure enough, we did get a heavy dust storm.

Well, we didn't find very much in Liu li ch'ang, because the stores were pretty empty and it no longer had any charm. It used to be a temple fair type of a place, but now it was just for tourists and I guess, had been picked over pretty well.

We then got in our bus and started off to the airport. It got worse and worse. A strong wind was blowing and it really was quite stormy. By the time we got into the airport, we found that the plane was not going to leave right away, that we were going to have to go to the little airport hotel which turned out to be a very nice small hotel. We spent two nights there and days at the airport. The rooms were small but very comfortable. They were able to put us all up right on the same hallway. Downstairs they had a restaurant and gift shop where you could buy Chinese embroideries or little jars.

They had good food there. Again I was thinking about this cooking school they must have, because we were served the same kinds of things we had had at the Peking Hotel. We looked out of our rooms and you could hardly see the corner of the next block, and the weather got worse and worse. In the daytime, we had to go over to the airport, hoping all the time that the skies would clear up and we could leave for Sian. We sat at this long dining table on hard wooden chairs all day.

We were able to walk around a bit and enjoy some decorative paintings on the large walls of this dining room. They were scenes of different parts of the world. There was a white curtain over one area of a tropical scene with naked ladies near a stream. Of course some of the gentlemen were quite intrigued to see what was behind that curtain, so we had some good laughs watching people trying to sneak around and see what was behind the curtain and why!

Well, the table and the windowsills got covered with this dust even though every window was closed. It seemed to seep in the cracks. We finally left on the third day. We spent two days in that dining room, and two nights in the little hotel.

It was a bit wearing and we were sorry to have missed those days in Sian, because of all places we wanted to visit, that was the finest and most historic town. I was particularly anxious to visit it because Woodbridge had been there years ago, and his particular field had been the history of T'ang times, which was at the era when Sian was the capital of Shensi province. But we finally

Bingham: were able to take off for Sian and flew for I guess it was about two hours, two-and-a-half hours perhaps, and landed there and went again in another little bus to a great big hotel near the center of town which was being renovated, and had very nice rooms again--ours had rayon satin bed coverlets--although nothing like the views of course, that we had in Peking. Just garden areas in process of rebuilding.

We went to see the marvelous site where they'd found those great big lifesize figures of warriors done in clay, near the tumulus of Emperor Ch'in-shih Huang-t'i. The extraordinary thing was that not any one was like another. Every one was different. The faces were different; the clothing, the figures, and you wondered who in the world had made them and how they'd ever been able to design them that way. A most extraordinary place. The National Geographic had an excellent article about that very place about a year or two after we were there.

We also saw the tomb--it is called a tumulus--of the Emperor Ch-in-shih Huang-t'i. It was covered with bushes of pomegranates. Evidently that area is famous for its pomegranates. We didn't go to the other tombs that I have heard were in that area, but we visited a silk factory and watched them weaving the silk. Again, this terrific crowding in buildings. The noise and clatter of those looms was horrendous. I don't know how those women workers stood it. Each loom was so close together, you hardly could walk between. We had to go single file, of course. They explained all about the way the weaving was done.

Most times, when we went to factories, they had a little shop that we could visit afterwards and buy things if we wanted to. Very commercial minded, as so many good Chinese always seem to be.

Levenson: And Americans.

Bingham: And Americans, yes.

We went from Sian to Chengtu, leaving the hotel in the early morning, also by plane and also delayed several hours. The weather became bad and was raining and stormy, so they couldn't feel safe in taking the plane over all the mountains we had to cross. Therefore, they had to wait until the weather cleared sufficiently, about noon, so that it would be safe to land. At Chengtu we stayed in a very nice hotel. The rice there, of course, and the grain in the fields, was much taller than it had been in Peking because it's very much warmer and they'd had more rain and clear sunshine than they get in Peking.

I'm always interested in seeing what the little farms look like. In this area they had groups of farmhouses surrounded by bamboo, like islands among the rice paddies. In Chengtu we went out to see the big water diversion project. The Min River comes

Bingham: down through the mountains and ever since Han times, I think it was, they've had a system of irrigation in the big valley there and so the water is diverted to different channels and then distributed throughout the fields.

There was a little temple high on a hill on a small rocky island in the middle of the river at one point, so we climbed up many wide steps to the temple and went through it. The river went one direction and the diversion channeled the water in the other direction. After we visited that temple, we went up on a hillside and came down and crossed a bridge over onto another flat island.

Levenson: A very swaying bridge, as I recall?

Bingham: Well, it was somewhat swaying, yes. At the island there was a man who had spread a sheet of some sort and on the ground, he had all kinds of medicinal things--a monkey skull, among others. I don't remember what they all were, but they were really very strange to us.

After Chengtu, we went on to Chungking, and that was really quite an amazing experience because it was so far up the Yangtse River. As we drove into town, we saw caves in the hills along the roadway which were used by people during the air raids for shelter when the Japanese were bombing Chungking, China's wartime capital. I never thought I would have the chance to go there!

We landed at the airport which was a long distance out of town, surrounded by rice fields. Here the grain looked very luxuriant. We drove in again, in a little bus to the hotel, which was a fabulous place. It was located in town, but it was down in sort of a valley, and it looked like part of the Temple of Heaven that had been put down there, with great big wings where rooms for guests were located. It turned out that it was built in the era when the Russians were building a lot of things in China, when Russian influence was very popular.

We had rooms on different floors, different corridors, so that we weren't very close together. Our rooms were very strange--we had a bedroom and a sitting room, which we never had time to use, and our own bath. Then we'd go across this big Temple of Heaven part of the structure to a dining room.

We were able to get out of town to see the excellent arts and crafts institute. This was a teaching institution. They had made very beautiful things there, exhibited in several rooms. We also visited the building where sculpture students were working. To our amazement two young men had each made a statue of a beautiful naked Chinese girl, who had donned her clothes by the time we arrived.

Bingham: Andy Jameson got a lovely teapot. Some of the group bought silk scarves that were hand dyed, that were really pretty, very thin silk. I wished afterwards that I had gotten some of those, but I didn't have the interest in them at the time I was there.

I got outside before our group did, and as they came out I took pictures of them. I thought it would be fun to have that memory.

We went up to several parks. In one of the parks there was a big area like a tennis court where young people went roller skating. They had these new skates with the plastic wheels and they couldn't use them very well. One poor boy fell; his feet flew up in front of him and he sat down. Some of them were tumbling around or playing games. They were trying to play ball together, but that was pretty difficult. Nearby, there was a fine view of the Min River area.

Another park had wonderful plants in it. It was like a botanical garden. We went around with an old man who was the caretaker-gardener there who explained some of the plants to us. Again I took some pictures. There was a little lake near it. I think of that day as a very pleasant one. On the way back, we drove along for wonderful views of the Min River where it comes into the Yangtze at Chungking. It was quite a large river with a good flow of water.

We also had views of the Yangtze River and a large railroad yard near the river from points on the hillside, because Chungking is a very hilly city. At one point we drove past a big square where there was a public building and there was a line of men standing there at the balcony with signs on their chests, and we said, "What in the world is that?" Mr. Yang said, "Oh, they're prisoners, and on their chest is written what their crime was." This was a way of punishing them, to show them in public, which seems like a cruel way but I guess it's less cruel than some other ways they've treated their prisoners.

Levenson: Yes, public shame seems to be a pretty good method of deterring other people.

Bingham: We went to a hospital there the second day we were there. The hospital was in three or four different buildings, very dark brick buildings on a steep hillside. Inside it was dark even; the paint wasn't very fresh. They allowed us to go up into the upper balcony of an operating room and watch an operation done with acupuncture as anesthetic. Some of our group had acupuncture.

Levenson: Was it successful? For whatever ailed them?

Bingham: I don't think so. Mr. Adloff had some because he had some arthritis in one of his limbs. I don't think he felt it helped him much. I guess you have to believe sincerely in these things.

Levenson: And persevere.

Bingham: As to the men that were on the operating tables, one had something the matter with his throat and they put a big steel rod down his throat to look at what the trouble might be. On the other one, they were going to do an operation. It looked to me probably as though he'd had a cleft palate which they were fixing. They covered him up with sheets. Then they put this big metal frame inside his mouth and it looked like a cruel torture thing, but again, they said that with acupuncture he was insensitiive to it. But it was interesting to have been allowed to see this kind of thing. They were very careful about the way they handled sterilized linen which was tan rather than white.

I was awfully glad we didn't have to be taken care of there. However, the Adloffs had been quite sick at the time we got in that dust storm and had to go back in to Peking to the big hospital there that used to be the Rockefeller Hospital, now called National Hospital. They were well cared for.

Virginia had pneumonia and had to leave us, but she got over it very well, so that they were able to meet us in Chungking and take the river trip down the Yangtze together.

Levenson: That must have been beautiful.

Bingham: It was beautiful but it was very foggy, too, so it wasn't the clear weather I thought it might be. However, we all got out on the deck when we did not sit in the wide glassed-in lounge at the front of the upper cabin deck. We were able to take some pictures, and they came out reasonably well.

It was really very exciting to be in Chungking to me, because it seemed like I had really reached interior China. I forgot to say that at Chengtu we saw a train going across the countryside. It seems that they do a great deal of transporting of oil from the hinterland further west than Szechwan where there are oil fields. They bring the oil out to the big cities like Shanghai; I suppose Peking too. I hadn't realized that they had oil in China.

The evening before we went on the boat, we were taken down to the bluff overlooking the river near where we were going to be boarding the boat the next morning. The river was quite low, it seems, and there was a big hard mud flat between the bank and the river. They had made a path across that to where the boat would

Bingham: dock. So the next morning early, early, we got up and went down to the river and boarded the boat. It was like one of our great big ferry boats that went across the bay, only it was not a ferry boat of course. It had to have a very strong engine and propeller to get itself back up the river against the current, because the Yangtze has more water flowing out of it than any river in the world, and it also has very speedy flow through the gorges.

There are rocks underneath the surface at numerous places, and in low water they have to be very careful where they go because there are ledges and rocks underneath the water. Often you could tell where they were because of the whirlpools or the smoothness with which the water flowed in a certain way. To guide these large boats there were small boat-shaped channel markers, red ones to be kept to the portside and green ones to be kept to starboard.

On the bank, visible from sharp curves in the river, was a large white arrow directing whether the boat going upstream or the one going downstream had the right of way when there happened to be two boats at such a curve or narrow place in the river.

Villages along the river seemed isolated from one another by the very steepness of the mountains unless they used this swift river for communication. A few factories were perched on a less steep slope far above the river. There was an area where we saw entrances to coal mines. We stopped at several towns on the way. On the dock of one there were large baskets of eggs. At another, many wicker chairs were loaded onto our boat as freight and blocked lower halls where some of the poorer passengers slept on the floor. Passengers disembarked and embarked at each such stop.

Coolies carried incredible loads up long, steep flights of stone steps to towns. At high water these flights of stairs might be largely submerged. The docks were floating and presumably adjustable to high and low water. At one or two places, hulls of metal ships being built rested on the earth bank well above the water level we were on, but would be completely built and ready for launching by high water time!

At Ichang we saw the work progressing on the monumental dam being built stone by stone across this awesome Yangtze River. We had seen rocky hillsides at river edge being pick-axed away and wheelbarrow loads of stone pieces thrown from wheelbarrows over the edge of this quarry's area onto barges to be floated down to the site of the dam.

A canal bypass with locks was under construction beyond one end of the dam to accommodate shipping by junks and the large motorized ships and oil tankers, some of which we saw being hauled downstream by pairs by one tugboat. There were still a few very picturesque

Bingham: sailing junks and rafts transporting supplies. We passed at least one small pagoda on a low hill and a picturesque multi-tiered temple rising up the side of a very large rock. The views along the river were impressive and very beautiful.

I remember looking at the bank at one point and realizing that the water at the left-hand side was much lower than the water at the right-hand side of the place where I was looking. So it shows how fast the water goes down. We did see whirlpools and we did one time see a man who'd been drowned, floating down the river, which was very sad. The idea that nobody had thought to find him or catch him, but it's one of those things in China where human life is less precious than it is to us. There are so many people, I guess, they're very careless about that sort of thing.

The first morning when we woke, we were going through the first gorge. The rocky cliffs seemed within reach from the boat. Later, we stopped at a little town at the end of that day and climbed up steps up to what they called a hotel. Again, a shop with a lot of wickerwork things and some old antique jewelry. It was like some of the old China places that I'd remembered where there was an awful odor about. Unclean. But we sat and looked at the cases of things and the chairs and tables that had been made, and then we went back to the ship. As we left the building, we were faced with a dense gathering of curious townspeople.

Soon thereafter, whether it was at that place or another further on, the ship became crowded with wicker chairs; just loads of wicker chairs, one piled on top of the other in pairs, in the hallways where people even were sleeping. Our little cabins were very small, but we had two bunks in our cabin and a little washstand. That was another thing: everywhere where we stayed overnight, in hotels or on the boat, they had hot water with a thermos bottle and a little tea container and cups so that we could make ourselves tea whenever we wanted.

Levenson: It's nice, isn't it?

Bingham: It's very nice; it's a very civilized way to do. We really found that very pleasant.

Two things I'd forgotten to mention. I think it was after Sian, the day we went on up to see the river, we stopped for lunch at a small village, and when we were getting in the bus again, there was a man who came along with a small child and looked in the window. I tried talking some Chinese to him. He seemed so pleased. He smiled and the baby smiled, and I got a picture of him quite close by. I enjoyed finding that some of my Chinese that I'd learned years before did come back. I don't really talk

Bingham: Chinese; I don't know Chinese, but just enough so I was able to keep house with it when we lived there in the 1930s. And this came back, so I was able to say a few things to people.

In China, I was fascinated by the fact that the people were so friendly, even in little villages where we stopped. Another time I guess it was Chengtu when we were out in the country, we were taken to a village for lunch where there was a place with a nice garden and we had our lunch in the garden, which was perfectly charming. There were big rose bushes and some azaleas out in bloom.

Levenson: I remember the roses in China are so beautiful. Quite different than most of what you see--

Bingham: I think the roses, some of them, originated in China. I remember going to a lecture here in Berkeley about that.

Well, we went down the Yangtze. It must have taken us two and a half or three days, and we landed at Wuhan, which is the name for three cities all together there, Hankow, Hanyang, and Wucheng.

The afternoon we got there, Tom Blaisdell, Elizabeth Olney, and I walked down to a public park toward where the boat had docked; it wasn't near it. In this park there were many, many of these dawn redwoods which we consider such a rarity. They come from the interior of China, north of the Yangtze River. I heard a young man, Bruce Bartholomew, who was curator at the Botanical Garden for the University of California in Berkeley talk about the place, because he had been there with a group of botanists and agricultural people on a trip to China. They were heads of important gardens in this country, and they had gone to the place where they found these dawn redwoods were growing naturally. We took many pictures of them. He had collected samples of different kinds of camellias that grew wild in the hillsides. It was developing then. That was his particular interest.

We were so surprised to see those dawn redwoods in the park. The next day we went to visit a rug factory in Wuhan. Here, outside the factory, they had planted all these dawn redwoods, which in time would give them shade in summer to protect it from the high heat of the sun. They weren't very tall yet; they were only about ten feet tall when we saw them.

We also went to lunch at a park which surrounded East Lake, a lovely big lake. It's very confusing because West Lake is way east of Hangchow, and this was East lake but west of the East Lake. [laughter] Now I'm getting confused.

They had planted a virtual forest of these dawn redwoods along the shore in one area. There were lots of row boats out on the lake. Some of them were shaped like water birds--one was the shape of a swan, another the shape of a duck, and there were several others. Many were just plain rowboats.

Bingham: One of the plain rowboats pulled up beside where we were sitting on the grass and on stumps of trees and a bench. I tried again to talk some Chinese to these people, and they were fascinated. We had quite a little hand and talk conversation.

Levenson: Hand and talk? You mean gestures. [laughter]

Bingham: Yes. Then we went into a western-style building where we were served lunch. After that, we drove around the park for a short time. It was quite exciting because the walks were very narrow. They were meant for people to walk on, but our driver knew how he could get around in the little van, and people made way for us.

Happy Family Relationships Remembered

Levenson: I'd like to start by asking about your relationship with your parents as you recollect it.

Bingham: Oh, I felt I got along very nicely with my parents. They were very congenial to one another. I don't ever remember them arguing in front of us. And they were very kind to us. I thought they had done an awfully thoughtful and good job of educating us and giving us wonderful experiences, both with our big household in town or at Lenox, and when we would go away for weekends quietly in the country with them and have to do our own cooking and housekeeping. I felt that these were very rich experiences, and particularly helpful later in our lives when we don't have so much help. And they were good about helping us get along together as brothers and sisters, even though we had plenty of disagreements among ourselves.

Levenson: How do you think they succeeded in that? Was there much sibling rivalry?

Bingham: You see, in those days we didn't know about sibling rivalry. We never talked about psychology or why we did things. It was just that we did things that way because that was the nice way and the pleasant way to do it. I don't think we had any analysis whatsoever about our actions or reactions.

My mother was a very tolerant person, very calm and very efficient in her quiet way. I remember her sitting for hours at her desk, either writing or telephoning, because she had many things as I told you before, which she was helping to manage, plus her household and children. But we had a real pattern of life. The schooling and country life that we had was all very much the same year after year, and we knew what to count on. We knew we could always talk to my mother or father. They seldom scolded or criticized; they listened and made constructive comments.

Bingham: When I'd go to parties when I was older, I always went to say good-night to her and sat on her bed sometimes, and told her about the people I'd met and what we did at the party. This was delightful; I always enjoyed doing that. I think that doesn't happen nowadays so much. Youngsters want to be independent as they say, and they don't confide in their parents. That's my observation.

Levenson: I know you're a lot younger than Eleanor Roosevelt, but I remember reading so much about the way her mother-in-law dominated her. Do you feel that your mother, to some extent, dominated you in the early days of your marriage?

Bingham: I think that she wasn't awfully tolerant of some of the things that Woodbridge wanted to do. But I never sensed that she was dominating me. We had to ask much of her in those days because we didn't have much money, and she was very generous in helping us out. We never asked her point blank for money, but she knew that we needed help.

When we moved to California, she did have a Scotch girl come with us. She was a relative of one of the men who worked at the W&J Sloane store, and of a nice family.

Levenson: What was she critical of?

Bingham: I don't think she understood the university world at all well, because she had not been to college, and I hadn't either, of course. I think that she felt that there were things that Woodbridge could perhaps be doing that he hadn't done and that we should have waited to be married even longer than we did because we didn't have the proper financial support for ourselves.

However, both our families were able to help us out, and I think that's what we all realized. But young people don't always think things through so thoroughly, and I'm sure we didn't probably realize all the implications.

I still had a brother in college. As I say, my mother had many responsibilities. But I felt very close to my mother; I didn't ever feel any antagonism.

Levenson: That's lovely.

Bingham: I thought I was very lucky. And the same with Father. Father was genial and he was always patient too. I remember Mother giving me a big spanking once, but I think I probably well deserved it. [laughter] But I don't remember Father ever getting very cross with us, except once when we were on a large ocean liner with huge menus in front of us all and we could not make up our minds what to order.

Bingham: Down came his fist on the table. "Why can't you make up your minds and be done with it?!" And they planned together to make the days pleasant and interesting. Father used to take us to museums and read interesting things. In the morning, every day practically, when he'd come down to breakfast, he'd read the newspaper, but he also found a place there where there was a Thornton W. Burgess story of animals. Burgess was a columnist. That made us feel we were just part of his life.

He took us on walks on Saturdays or Sundays and did a lot of things with his children, so that we always felt wanted and enjoyed. I think that was important as I look on children's lives today. Not many parents make a special effort to do that kind of thing, at least so it seems to me. They don't seem to have time.

And, we'd go sailing in the summer. I loved the sailing; it was wonderful sport! Or fish for blue crabs from a rowboat along the shallow parts of the Black Hall River.

Father had a boat and we had several cousins who had the same model, so on occasional weekends there'd be races. It always tested our skill and our ability to judge the winds and the currents. Father used to tell us that was the best lesson in the world because you couldn't fool the weather, or the waves, or the tides; that you really had to know what was the right thing to do. That was good training.

As I think back on it, I think Father was extraordinary to have so many ways of teaching us things that made life pleasant and with things to anticipate. We never felt that he was insisting on our doing something. He always made it pleasant enough so it was fun to do it. Maybe this is something a lot of us could learn about for handling our own children and people.

Levenson: What do you think about the value of competition that's much disputed these days?

Bingham: I think it's good to have competition, but I think within a family, it sometimes can be rather disastrous because it brings about dissension. I think competition always challenges one to do one's best. Do you feel that way?

Levenson: What I don't like about tennis matches is that somebody always has to lose. But basically I agree. [laughs]

Bingham: The funny thing was, when my second sister and I used to play, I would often beat her when we played at home. But when we played in tennis matches, she always won. And with the violin, she always did better than I did. When we came to school lessons, my younger sisters did very well with their school work.

Bingham: When I was small, up till I was about twelve, I used to get excellent marks. But when I was older, I guess I got lazy or something, and I didn't get as good marks, whereas they measured up and got much better marks.

It didn't bother me too much at the time because I was enjoying what I was learning, except geometry, and I never could see any sense in a girl having to learn geometry, never realizing that it was good mental training. So I flunked my first year of geometry and had to take it over. That was a good lesson, I tell you, because I just really disliked that subject.

I had history of art that last year also, and that made up for the dislike of geometry. We had a Scottish teacher and she was Miss Weyman at Foxcroft. She made us learn all the details in many of the famous paintings. When I went abroad, it was a tremendous help to have learned all these facts about the painters and the era they lived in and the schools they belonged to; also the subjects that they used in their paintings. So it was fun to be able to share with my family the information I had learned.

We had a piano teacher at Foxcroft who had a wig. That, of course, caused quite a stir among the girls, but we didn't often run into people who wore wigs in those days. We had little concerts about once a year and that always was terrifying, but it was good to work up to; made us really learn our pieces by heart.

Four Family Deaths

Levenson: You told me that your mother was very ill during the war. When did she die?

Bingham: She died in 1944. She had multiple sclerosis. So it was a long, slow process of deterioration. And I was out here all the time. I managed to go back a month or two before she died, and visit her in Charleston, South Carolina. The two weeks I was there, I tried to take her for walks or drives, or to do things especially for her. I was always sorry I couldn't do more. [pause]

Levenson: So your father was left alone then.

Bingham: Yes. In a way it was fortunate Mother died when she did, because it wasn't long after that that my sister [Evelyn] was killed in a ski accident. I had gone East for the YWCA to the second convention I'd ever been to. It was in Atlantic City. I got a phone message soon after I arrived telling me that she had died while on a ski

Bingham: slope in Canada. I had tried to call my sister when I arrived in New York on my way to Atlantic City, but she had gone out of town just a few minutes before to go on this ski trip. After they told me that she was gone, I went right back to Father. I took the train, the first one I could get; went back, and told them I'd be back at the conference, because they'd paid my way there and I didn't want to leave the whole conference and have no report to bring back. But after the convention, I returned to New York City.

Levenson: It's very unusual, isn't it, to be killed skiing. What happened?

Bingham: Evelyn went up to Canada when my sister Adela was living in Montreal. Evelyn and her husband, Brantz Mayor, went skiing on Mont Trendlert. I don't know just exactly what did happen, but the report that her husband gave to Father was that it was late afternoon and they were ready to go up again once more and come down. They went up and she was up part way and stopped, because she said she was tired. Then he said that he went up further, and as he came down he passed by her, and she was just standing there. He went on down but she didn't follow, so he went back and he found her lying in the snow, face down. He supposed that somehow she'd toppled over. Whether she fainted, we never knew.

We had the service for her up in the country at Old Lyme. Poor Father, it was so hard on him. I finally persuaded him that we would fly down to Charleston, South Carolina because he had a house there at the edge of the country club, and I thought to get away from the city and all this noise and traffic and his routine there, would be a good thing. He loved to play golf and he had many friends there.

He'd never flown before, but he agreed to do it. We flew down together and we had a very good trip, fortunately. It wasn't one of those very bumpy ones. Down there he felt happier, I think. Seeing his friends, and I tried to do things with him too.

He was always such a dear person; did so much for us, I was glad to be able to do something for him. Then when I got him settled there with a good servant couple he had, a man to help and a woman to cook, I went back to Atlantic City and fitted into the conference, and they were pretty surprised that I could come back that soon, but I said it was better than not. Because I was occupied with other things too. You can't dwell too long on such tragedy.

I was able to go through with that conference, and made some awfully good friends. Nancy Jort, a student who came from Berkeley with our group, and I, were rooming together. She put up with my sleepless nights a few times, tossing around. But I really had a very wonderful experience there. Some of the people that I got to know on the National Board [of the YWCA] I was friends with for years after.

Bingham: My father carried on; went back to New York and had kept the apartment there where they'd been and kept up his going to the office. I don't remember exactly what year he retired but not at that time. So he was busy.

We tried to get back there, summers in Connecticut, to our place at Salem, fourteen miles from Black Hall, and we'd see him occasionally. The Sunday family lunches at his house continued with each family bringing their own lunch.

Several years later, Father married again, the widow of a man who had been a lawyer, and who Father had known for some years. [Ruth Ledyard] They were married by Henry S. Coffin in New York on April 20, 1948 at her apartment on 19 East Seventy-second Street. The apartment house was built on the place which had been the home of Louis Tiffany. Her daughters were girls that I had very much disliked. But we tried not to pay too much attention to them. She turned out to be a wonderful companion for my father. They had many friends in common, and they enjoyed many of the same things.

She came from Long Island, and we'd always thought Long Island people were pretty fancy. There were some conflicts, but sum total, I was very grateful that she and Father had found each other.

Years later, I had gone back for other meetings in New York for the YW, and I always tried to go and see Father after the meetings were over. I didn't try to work the family in any more than I could help during the meetings, because it was most important to carry through with what I was supposed to be doing.

I took Father one time for a walk in Central Park down to the menagerie, and we had a wonderful time looking at the animals. He got sick in the middle of it and I realized that he was not well, so we went back to my hotel and had a bite of lunch. Then he said he was going to go home, so I said, "Well, I'll get a taxi." He wouldn't hear of it and he wouldn't let me walk with him. My brother later told me he barely made it home because he was still very weak. I didn't realize he had a bad heart and that was his trouble.

One evening a few years later when he was down in Charleston with Ruth, his second wife, he just was sitting in his chair and he went to sleep and didn't wake up again. [January 19, 1964] So that was a very peaceful way to go. We had a beautiful service for him up in Old Lyme, Connecticut, and he and Mother were buried there near Evelyn in the family cemetery.

We were all gathered together and I realized how much strength it gives one to be with a family at a time like that. To plan the service and to see our friends was a great help.

Bingham: Meanwhile I'd had a brother [Dwight] who'd died also. He had polio; he caught that very bad type of polio. He was a young doctor in Hartford, Connecticut. I was glad that that hadn't happened when Father was alive. I think it was after he'd died. Just as I was glad Mother hadn't known about my sister.

Traditions of Needlework, Music, and Art

Levenson: One of the things I've always admired you for, Ursula, is your skill with your needle.

Bingham: I started that at any early age, because my mother did a great deal of sewing and embroidery as did her mother. We found some old silks that my grandmother had used to embroider pillows. We used to sit in the evening and do embroidery, or sit out on the porch during the daytime when it was very hot. Mother taught me many different stitches and also how to knit and to crochet. I did a great deal of it; enjoyed it; found it very relaxing.

Then in later years I tried to do some Danish embroidery, which is quite a fine type of pulled threads of heavy type fabric with embroidery called hardanger work, which I learned from maids we had one summer. I found that the designs that I could get were very interesting and much different from our designs. I suppose the Danes, having a very rough climate in winter, like to have colorful things in their houses. So they made all kinds of things, even little narrow strips to hang on the wall. My sister has done some of those.

Our family always enjoyed this sort of thing. In the summer when we were in our teens, Mother used to read to us in the evening, things like P.G. Wodehouse stories. We enjoyed those, and she would show us how to make our underwear and to finish off the dresses that we'd done on the machine during the day. It was a very happy time and it kept us occupied.

We only went to the movies in the country once a week. They only had movies at the town hall in Old Lyme one Wednesday a week. Mother never let us go to movies that she didn't think were suitable. So the times we went were quite limited, but we had all these other wonderful things to do in the evening, so we didn't miss it that much--games, Mother reading aloud while we sewed, music we played together and sometimes family or friends as guests.

Levenson: My aunt never let me go to movies between the age of six and twelve, so I envy you!

Bingham: I don't think we ever went when we were that young. This was after we were twelve or thirteen. Of course, all our friends would go to see all of them and we felt very left out at times. But in the long run it didn't matter. There also were dances after we were sixteen, at the country club and later at an inn.

Levenson: Did you teach your daughters to sew?

bingham: Yes, I did.

Levenson: Successfully?

Bingham: Well, yes. They've been good at that.

It was a great saving during the Depression years; I made a lot of the girls' dresses. I always remember the time when Mother had come to visit us, and then my husband's mother. When they both went back East, they each went to Best & Company and sent me a box full of little dresses, because they realized I was spending a lot of time doing this sewing. They thought it would be better for me not to have to do it.

So one summer we had a plethora of dresses. They were so pretty; we had fun dressing the girls up. Anne and Clare often wore identical dresses.

I did teach the girls to sew and knit, and they made a lot of their own clothes for a while. They enjoyed doing it. Then when they got married and had children of their own, they used to make some clothes for them. But they haven't taught all of their children how to sew, which is too bad. Some of those who did learn are quite good at it.

I suppose this is the trouble nowadays; they all look at television and they don't do the sewing that they used to because they don't have the time. They want to follow the programs that they've seen or heard about.

Levenson: And then music was a part of your childhood, and I think that you carried on with that with your own children.

Bingham: Yes, we did. We tried to have them all play something. Anne became very good at playing the piano. Marian used to play the violin very nicely, but she got interested in drawing and painting, especially when she was at Garfield School as a junior high student. She did so well with her art that when we went around the world and were in Hong Kong, she studied with an English lady who was married to a Chinese. She learned to do Chinese painting, and used to go downtown and across by ferry to the Mainland, Kowloon, to meet her teacher.

Bingham: On the way, she would see unique Chinese characters and she'd come home and stretch herself out on the floor with her paper and her ink and draw these people. I thought her drawings were quite original because they had a real Chinese touch but they also were very American interpretations of faces and characters of people. I think she's kept a good many of them. She took lessons for some years after she was married, with a Chinese teacher in Mount Kisko, New York, but unfortunately, has had to give it up. I think she may go back to it now that her children are more grown up. But she does a lot of work for her photographer-husband. She also made pottery and had her own kiln at Bedford Hills, New York.

I tried when a girl to do some painting, because living in Old Lyme in the summers, where there used to be, and still is, a wonderful group of artists. I thought taking some painting lessons would be a good idea.

Mother arranged with a Mr. Gregory Smith, who was well known at the time, to give painting lessons to my two sisters and me. We'd go every week to his house. Sometimes we painted outdoors. Once, I remember, we were sitting in a field, painting his house, and I painted these big, tall poplar trees. When he came around to look at my painting, he said, "Oh, you paint just like a Russian! Everything looks pretty black." So, I decided that wasn't my forte. But it was a good attempt.

We'd had painting and drawing at school, but it was a very different kind than this. It was very structured, whereas Mr. Smith used to just give us hints, and let us go our own free way pretty much. He'd help us with suggestions about color.

My sisters went on, but none of us were very good at it.

The Four Bingham Daughters

Levenson: You've had four children, all married, yes?

Bingham: Yes.

Levenson: And ten grandchildren.

Bingham: That's right.

Levenson: Do you want to start with the eldest and work on down and tell me about them?

Bingham: Anne graduated from Vassar in June 1951 on the same day as Clare graduated from Bennett Junior College. I was able to attend both ceremonies, though I had asked my father to attend Clare's because I feared I would not be able to be there. Anne then attended the College of Physicians and Surgeons (known as P&S) of Columbia University where she met her classmate, Richard Norris Pierson, Jr. and they were married in June of 1954.

He was the son of the well-known obstetrician who was my doctor when she was born June 9, 1929 at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center's Sloane Hospital! We had made plans for their wedding and found a lovely simple dress for her after I had attended the National Board YWCA meeting that winter in New York City. The wedding day was beautiful. The ceremony was performed by our minister, Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, then president of Union Theological Seminary, assisted by the minister of the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, Connecticut, the Reverent Dick Hoag. The reception was held after the ceremony at my father and Ruth Griswold's home at Black Hall.

They lived in an apartment overlooking the Hudson River while they completed their medical course at P&S. The following year, Anne was a resident at Tansy Hill Hospital, also in New York City. Later they had an apartment on Riverside Drive. I visited them once and had the maid's room next to the kitchen, looking out over the river to the Palisades of New Jersey along the Hudson River. I wondered how maids survived in the quarters provided for them on the far side of kitchens in those fine New York City apartments which I saw.

Yet it was enjoyable to be able to stay with that little family. They first had a little boy, Richard Norris, Jr., born February 18, 1956 who is now a doctor himself. I used to see him riding his tricycle around inside the apartment, bumping into the furniture and having a happy time. Anne was very patient about it, because it wasn't always possible for them to go outdoors in New York because it was too cold or windy on Riverside Drive. So he got his exercise and let off steam that way.

Richard served in the navy on Taiwan for over a year. Anne gave birth to Olivia, February 20, 1958, on Okinawa because the hospital there was superior and because a caesarian section was needed.

Later I visited them when they had the little house in Tenafly, New Jersey. It was a new community, and they didn't make friends easily. The children had a great place to play. There was a nice lawn in the back of the house and the street was flat with no traffic so they could ride their little tricycles and bicycles there. Alexandra deForest arrived on Hallowe'en, 1961, and Cordelia on February 28, 1963. I used to go and help when a new baby came so I could take care of the other children and do the cooking. That really was a pleasure in a way.

Bingham: Clare was married before Anne, actually, on May 2, 1953 to Edward Osgood Brown. He was another P&S student in the class below Anne and Dick. They got married in the Catholic church of St. Thomas Aquinas in New York City, and Father and Ruth had a small reception for family in their apartment. Ned was a handsome Harvard graduate from Santa Fe, New Mexico, whose father had established a hospital in that town.

Marian Sloane Brown was born in December of that year. When a second baby was expected, I went to stay with them in their Fort Washington Avenue apartment. Before her arrival, we used to go to a secluded park area within the Medical Hospital complex. There was an attractive young dark-haired mother with her son about Sloane's age who sat by herself whereas most of the mothers and their children were a short distance away. I asked Clare why this young woman was not with the others. "Oh," Clare said, "she comes from Lebanon, and the American girls do not know what to talk to her about. I said, "All the more reason for our befriending her." We went and talked to her for a while, then invited her to the apartment for a cup of tea or coffee, and talked about the country and customs. But I don't think she ever did make friends with the American mothers. We were quite accustomed to associating with people from other countries so were less abashed about meeting newcomers.

Clarissa Anne Brown arrived June 19, 1955; we call her Lisa for short. I still remember the feeling I had when Clare was leaving the hospital--the same one where Anne had been born--and they handed me this darling little baby. She seemed so fragile, so limp. But what a wonderful young girl and now an exceptionally fine mother of a daughter she has turned out to be!

Clare had two babies to care for when Ned had to sign up for army duty on completion of his medical college training. They spent some months in Texas for his army training period. Then he was ordered to Munich, Germany, to a large hospital at Perlacher Forst on the outskirts of the city. I took Clare to stay with me at the Westbury Hotel when I had reservations for us and the children for a night before she had to report to the army place in Brooklyn, New York, where families were assembled for a night previous to sailing overseas. It was a dreadful, crowded place with children screaming and tired mothers, none of whom she knew. I guess a lot of them were very upset to have been taken away from home. Fortunately Sloane and Lisa were accustomed to traveling and to visiting, so they managed to sleep. The following day they were all taken in buses to board the ship. I went to see them off.

When they reached Germany they boarded a train. They had miserable accommodations and both children were ill that night, so when they arrived at Munich they were tired and glad that stint was over. They had a good apartment at Perlacher Forst with a spacious playground out of doors and within sight.

Bingham: The family's next move was to Giesen, not far from Frankfurt, where Ned was in charge of a clinic. On January 21, 1960, Edward Eagle Brown was born in Frankfurt and named for Ned's uncle in Chicago, a prominent banker. His sister, Phyllis, was named for his wife.

When they flew back to New York, we went to meet them at the airport and took them to Salem, Connecticut for the summer. In the fall, they rented a house for Clare and the children in Pelham, New York, while Ned completed his residence at Roosevelt Hospital in New York City. Army service counted as internship.

They came to Salem for another summer and decided to move to Boulder, Colorado, although Ned had been offered a job at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ned's family had come from Santa Fe. He was offered a position where his father had built a hospital, but he thought he'd rather go somewhere else. He wasn't going to practice in the same field as his father. Ned had specialized in obstetrics and gynecology.

They had a chance to go to Boulder, where we had friends. It's a beautiful area. So they felt that community would be a good place to settle as well as a beautiful location and with a need for a man of his specialty. They bought a nice little house in a new development section of town on a hillside overlooking the town and the plains eastward, and lived there until they were divorced in 1969.

It was very sad to me because they had seemed so congenial. Clare had had to give up the Protestant religion in favor of his Catholicism. They were quite loyal to the Catholic church in Boulder. But Ned became very much interested in somebody else, and so Clare finally divorced him.

Then on July 11, 1970, Clare married James S. Junge at the First Congregational Church in Old Lyme. Jim is a fine architect and a cheerful, wonderful husband for Clare. They lived in a roomy house he had built near the edge of town in Boulder, right at the edge of a small lake at the beginning of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The views were glorious. The house, on one floor mostly, attractive and spacious. Before long, he built another house, this one two stories and called Dam House, at the end of the Lake of the Pines. Finally, several years later, they moved back near Boulder because the lake had involved so much driving because Jim's business necessitated flying from Denver to jobs outside of Boulder and also driving to his office in Boulder daily. The children's schools were very good in town east of the lake.

Our third daughter, Evelyn, graduated from Briarcliff College, New York, then attended the Mannes Music College in New York City, first as a piano major then as an organ major. She was there for three years before returning to Berkeley to enter the University

Bingham: of California here as a music student. However, she transferred to the geography department when it became apparent that it would be difficult for her to complete the requirements necessary for her to graduate from the music department. This was a fortunate decision and she graduated as a cartographer with a B.A. in geography.

Levenson: A good statement.

Bingham: Yes. Let's see, Evelyn has stayed here in Berkeley with us. She met a young man in the church here, Richard Prosser, and they were married in our church.

Levenson: I was there. You kindly invited me.

Bingham: Then we had a reception at the house, 27 Tamalpais Road. I was very surprised because they didn't want music! I would have thought both of them, being musical, would have enjoyed having music at their wedding, but they didn't want it. So we just had the reception in our living room, which was a beautiful big room. People could walk out in the garden.

They rented a house up the hill from here and lived there for thirteen years. But Dick was a little difficult, and finally, Evie decided that she would have to have a divorce also. In the spring of 1983, Evelyn decided she had done all she could to make her marriage to Richard S. Prosser a success and happy. So she consulted counselors and a lawyer. Following their advice and talking with us, her parents, she was granted a divorce on December 8th of that year.

As a small child, she used to be taken to play at Cordinices Park by Ada de Bruyn who helped me with our children for a number of years. There she had met Mrs. Michael Goodman [Mildred] and her son, Michael, named after his father, Professor Michael Arthur Goodman, architect. I met Mildred at various times and she always asked me about Evie.

In the course of events, Evie returned to Berkeley to study at the University of California. She and Michael met again and went on dates. More years went by. Then at the time the divorce was imminent they met again. Finally on January 28, 1984 they were married at the Faculty Club on the UC Berkeley campus with only their close family members present.

Evelyn made all the plans for the event in consultation with Michael, with her parents and his parents. Judge John Stanley Cooper married them. It was a beautiful late-afternoon ceremony. There was champagne and dinner afterwards. Dr. John Herbert Otwell spoke to the group before dinner with appropriate words of blessing. It was a very special and beautiful occasion.

Bingham: At the time of Evie's divorce, it seemed very sad to us to have a third daughter divorced when my parents and ourselves have been able to carry through all those years. But that seems to be the pattern these days; it's very unfortunate. However, in the long run, it will be a good thing. I hope.

Levenson: She sounds in good spirits.

Bingham: I think she's really been very brave about it, because it must not have been easy. But she's never showed any emotion to us. She's come and seen us very faithfully. Through my illness, she's been wonderful, except in recent months when she has been less helpful about doing things to help us. But I am sure this is temporary. [pause]

Marian is our youngest daughter. In 1959, she went to Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut. In her first year, she met this young girl, Susan Twyeffort in the senior class who became a good friend. She introduced Marian to her cousin Bill [William B. Hubbell, Jr.]. Bill fell in love with Marian and she with him. It was a wonderful match. I found that Bill's mother had friends among many of my best friends in the East. It was extraordinary. So, Mrs. Hubbell and I soon became good friends.

I came East before Woodbridge that summer to meet Marian at Radcliffe where she was taking summer courses to discuss her pending engagement. Marian was also married in the church in Old Lyme on September 3, 1960. We had planned an engagement party for her and invited friends from the East to come. We didn't ask any of our western friends because we knew they wouldn't be able to come out. We had quite a big party over at the Camp, which was my mother and father-in-law's place. Right near where we lived.

Just about the day before the engagement party, Bill was asked if he would take a job as a photographer to go from England to India with a French couple who were working for the United Nations, UNESCO. They were leaving in a short time. Bill and Marian had to think about that and so did we.

After the party they went to visit the couple who wanted to engage Bill for the job they had to do. Bill and Marian had been planning to get married at Christmas so that their friends would be free to come from college or school. If Bill was to go on this trip, and he was anxious for Marian to share it with him, they would have to get married much sooner. So, we decided to plan the wedding for two weeks from then, on September 3rd.

We turned around and ordered invitations and got them out and got everything in order in two weeks time. Marian used Anne's wedding dress which saved some time. I remember, Mrs. Hubbell

Bingham: told me of a dress shop in Greenwich, Connecticut, where Mr. Gangarelli had good taste and was very helpful to deal with. I went to Greenwich and talked to him at his shop about bridesmaids' dresses. He told me to go to a certain wholesale place in New York and made the arrangements for me to see certain dresses there, and that's where I got the bridesmaids' dresses. Also, I picked up some velvet ribbon and artificial flowers on Thirty-seventh Street as I rushed to Grand Central Station and home to Salem. Then several of us made the flower hair bands one evening, which matched the pretty blue dresses. Velvet ribbons with little artificial flowers on them. They were very becoming. We didn't have time to worry about hats. I'm telling you all the details!

Levenson: [laughing] That's all right.

Bingham: Then the invitations I ordered were done very quickly for us in New London. I asked cousins with good handwriting and young people to come one evening to address the invitations after we got the guest list in order, and we sent out the invitations in time with the help of all these young people.

The minister was available on the Saturday we chose, and so was the church. The caterer who had done Anne's wedding would come and we could get a tent that day in case of rain. The florist also would be free to help. Marian and Bill were married, September 3rd., two weeks after their engagement party.

They first went to England to learn how to run and repair Land Rovers, which was the sturdy car that they were going to use to go on this trip, because it was a very rigorous trip. They drove all the way from London to Paris where they were entertained very graciously at dinner and they spent a few happy days in Paris. Then they traveled on south through Yugoslavia and across Turkey and into Iran, and across Iran into India. Their Christmas card was a picture of Bill and Marian sitting on the hood of their Land Rover with their guards, who were two Pakistani turbanned warriors with big guns; it was quite an amazing Christmas card.

They went across India and then up into Sikkim, where they had an introduction, and stayed in Sikkim as guests of the ruler, and took lots of very interesting pictures there. Bill is a photographer which was the reason why he was asked to go on this trip, because they wanted a record of the places they'd been and the schools they'd seen and the people they met and so on.

Levenson: How many children do they have?

Bingham: They have two children. Drika, the daughter, was the first one. She was born September 17, 1962. And then they had Brad [Jonathan Bradford]. After they returned from the trip, they rented an attractive apartment on top of an old house in Greenwich Village, On Twelfth Street. Being the top apartment, it had a fireplace and it had beams in the ceiling and some stained glass windows in the living room, and a sunny bedroom and kitchen. But I tell you, to take groceries up those four or five flights of stairs, was quite something. There were some nice restaurants in the area, and shops. So I think they had a very happy life those years.

Then later on they bought a house at Bedford Hills in New York. It was a very sweet house and only about half a mile from the Saw Mill River Parkway to New York City, so it was very easy for Bill to go back and forth. At that point, he was working for a photography group in Pleasantville, New York, so he didn't have very far to go. Pleasantville was only about two villages away from Bedford Hills. Then just this last year they moved to Greenwich, Connecticut, where they found a small house that they've renovated and added a big studio so Bill has a comfortable studio to work in. They are situated right near the main shopping center, the main street actually, and the railroad station, so it's very, very convenient. They are a wonderful, happy couple.

Thoughts on Marriage

Levenson: You have four daughters and three of their marriages didn't last. You must have thought about your marriage to Woodbridge that has gone on for so many years [56] and was planned when you were eighteen. Were there times when you felt it to be threatened, either by your own conduct or by his?

Bingham: Oh yes, there have been times of course. It was very difficult for me during the war when many of my friends had husbands here and my husband was off in Hawaii. He'd write me letters about going swimming and on the beach and having a wonderful time. I'd feel sad for myself but then again, I was lucky to have all these good friends.

Levenson: Were you tempted at any time?

Bingham: Oh, yes. We've each, I guess, all fallen heir to that kind of feeling.

Levenson: Did you fall?

Bingham: No. I was taken out to concerts and dinner and played music at home, but I realized that I had a family to be responsible to, and I had church responsibilities, and I was certainly not going to make trouble in my family, so I didn't. [pause]

No Fear of Flying

Bingham: We'll skip to years back and go to the fact that we used to go back East in the summertime. There was a house to pack up and business to attend to and all this to do, so I was always very tired when we left. When the girls were still at home we drove East by various routes so as to see more of our beautiful and interesting country. Later, we would fly. I was just thrilled with flying. I've never, in all the times we've flown, been disappointed in the views of sky and earth and the feeling that many people experience of nearly being birds! I wanted to have that feeling of freedom, and I think flying or sailing can give it to one to the greatest degree.

First, it used to be great to get away from the California duties that were always there every day, though I thoroughly enjoyed the life we led. I always was perfectly thrilled with flying. My father-in-law had been one of the early fliers in this country, so I knew that it was something that was safe and all right to do. He had arranged for my first flight over Mount Vernon and back with a pilot who later became famous.

Anyway, the main thing was the views and the ecstasy of being up in the air. In 1981, we flew East, and went to Salem, and I was tired when I got there. I thought especially then, "If I could just sit under a maple tree and read a book for a few days, I'd feel better." Instead of that, Woodbridge and I and Marian and Bill Hubbell and their children, now teenagers, went to see a performance of Othello at Stratford, Connecticut, and first ate our picnic on the lawn by the little river.

A Major Stroke in Long Island Sound, 1981

Levenson: We were talking about--

Bingham: Coming East.

Levenson: Yes. And you had a stroke, was it two years ago, in 1981?

Bingham: It's a little over two years ago, yes. After getting to Salem and going to Stratford to the play, the next day I went down to Old Lyme to visit our oldest daughter, Anne, who lives in the house where I used to live, in Connecticut. We call it the Brick House. It's an old house, built in 1820. It was a very strange but nice feeling to visit her there. Anne married again, a fine young man who was a submarine captain. [Richard T. Wright] He's now retired from the submarine service and works for a company in the area.

They had a small dinner for us that evening. The next day we started off and went over to the Beach Club. I was still not recovered from feeling tired after our trip. I went in swimming and it was about medium tide. I went out to the raft, I guess; I don't remember that part. I just remember coming back near the pier that went out from the beach into Long Island Sound, and Anne and Dick were standing up above. I got to the steps and suddenly I realized that my left side wasn't functioning; it was completely numb. So I called to Anne and I said, "Something's the matter with my left side. I can't swim. I can't feel it." She called to her husband and he came down and swam me ashore. I guess first she called the 911 emergency service and then she called our cousin and found out the name of a good doctor and called him, so he met us at the hospital. Next she called our cousin, Jennifer Griswold, who'd been a nurse in the hospital in New London.

She knew that I'd had a stroke. Of course, I didn't know at that time what it was that had happened to me. I had heard people talk about strokes and heart attacks but I'd never differentiated or asked details about what happened.

Levenson: What did happen?

Bingham: I had no warning whatsoever. Just suddenly, my left side wouldn't work. I was swimming only with my right side and, of course, you can't do that. It doesn't keep you afloat; I mean, you've got to stop. What I did was to put my right foot down to keep my head above water. I held onto the rope that went to the raft, so I was able to control myself and not go under water. And they swam me ashore.

I said, "Is there a surf board?" They were saying no, we don't have a stretcher. I said, "Do you have a surf board?" So the life guard found a surf board. The waves were not big.

Levenson: What presence of mind!

Bingham: They strapped me onto that. I don't know what happens to you; to me, in emergencies I suddenly get to thinking about what needs to be done. It's happened to me more than once in other instances.

Bingham: I did have a wonderful Red Cross course in First Aid when I was about to be married. One of the first things they taught you was to keep your presence of mind and also to make other people work for you. So this has stood me in good stead. I ought to write to the Red Cross and tell them about it.

Levenson: They'd love it!

Bingham: It was very amazing. Immediately, almost, there was a little motor boat that came with the policeman who also was trained in First Aid. In recent years, along the shore, they subscribed to getting a motor boat and paying for having police patrol, because there are so many beaches with crowds of people; also there'd been some thefts and break-ins in the region, so it was decided that it would be safer to have this police protection.

I had not realized that they were equipped to help with medical emergencies like mine. They came. And the ambulance came in about a half-hour, and I was taken to the hospital. On the way, they asked me questions about my medical history that they needed to know and about my family and so on. They were very efficient and careful.

By then the doctor, Dr. David Cavieke, had been warned and he was there ready to take care of me, and I don't remember much else of that.

Levenson: Were you in pain?

Bingham: No, I wasn't. But when I woke up, I'd been anesthetized and they'd had to operate on my head. Evidently one of the things that they do to prevent more serious trouble and pain, is to remove some of the blood clot. They have to know exactly when to do this, and they did this very skilfully.

When I woke up, I had this big bandage on my head, and it was very uncomfortable. And of course by then I'd gotten quite stiff, and any motion was painful. It was agony for days after that. But they gradually had me do therapy. The girls who came up to help me were very careful and well trained. I must say, the nursing service was pretty good. Some of the nurses were well trained in how to handle a person with stroke, but a few weren't.

The main thing was that they had to move me slowly and not jerk me, and of course, some of them didn't appreciate that. Well, I won't go into all the hospital business because that isn't very interesting to people. Really, the main thing is the aftermath which leaves you with a terrible feeling of shock, because you can't do anything. Life falls apart.

Life Falls Apart and Recovery

Levenson: Life falls apart. But you've put your life back together again and that's what I think is so remarkable.

Bingham: You have to do that.

Levenson: Where did the strength come from?

Bingham: I think a lot from my church and my family's support. Woodbridge has been most loyal and attentive and thoughtful, and friends have amazed me by their acts of love and generosity. Woodbridge was a brick. It must have been a shock to him, too. [coffee break]

Levenson: I used to sense that when I came to see you at Alta Bates Rehabilitation Center in Albany that you had to be too cheerful all the time and that you should have been allowed to let some of the negative feelings--the pain and the anger and the fear out--what do you think?

Bingham: I think the wonderful thing about that center was that everybody was cheerful and gay, because it gave you hope that you could get better, and that's what really pulls you through. I felt cheerful, really, about most everything, except that when I get thinking about the work I used to do, volunteer and all, and all the people I associated with and would be longer be able to, that was the part that was difficult. [pause]

Levenson: I'd like to hear about your rehabilitation. What was your condition after the stroke? What had you lost?

Bingham: I'd lost the ability to move everything on my left side. I could move the right side, but the left side was immobile. The doctor would come in and say, "Can you move your toes?" And I couldn't. "Can you move your hand?" And I couldn't. Then he would recommend the therapy treatments. They moved me to several different rooms in the course of my stay in the New London Memorial Hospital.

One time I was in a lovely blue room which was cheerful, and I discovered that my brother had given that room in memory of his wife who had died. She was a darling person; she had a sudden heart attack and was gone. A terrific shock to all of us. She was great fun, and a lovely hostess and sang very well with our family group.

Anyway, some of the nurses, one or two of them, were almost cruel. They didn't realize how it felt to have a stroke. Big strong women and it was at night time; I had no recourse. I'd tell the doctor and he did nothing about it. They were supposed to turn me over every two hours.

Bingham: I had some very good care at the end, there. Some of the nurses would tell me their troubles. Finally I told one of the doctors that I think it was time they got some really good head nurses, because the head nurses weren't particularly authoritative. I said, "What you need--this is a first class hospital; you need first class nursing here; not just this whoever you can get to do it," because it was very hard to find good nurses in those days and I thought I'd better be frank about it.

About three or four days later, the two new head nurses came. They had on nice caps and neat uniforms and things began to look up from there on, because they checked up on people, night and day, and saw that we were properly taken care of.

Levenson: Good for you!

Bingham: I just thought, well, my family had always been interested in hospitals and medicine, and I had had previous experiences in hospitals when I had children. Why shouldn't that continue? If they were going to do anything for people, they certainly should do it well; not just halfway.

I got to know one of the little night nurses. She was from the Philippines and had a little baby. I said, "Do you have friends here?" She said, "Oh no, I don't. It's very sad. My friends are all in the Philippines." So I told one of the other girls, a white girl, about this case and couldn't she do something about it. She said she certainly would. I've never known the upshot of it.

There are some girls who really have very sad and hard lives who are nurses, and I think that we all ought to feel that they should be more appreciated sometimes and that there should be more done for them in their off hours, if they need it.

Some of them would go to church, and one girl--I called her Little Miss Sunshine--used to come in in the morning--she had golden hair and she always wore a little yellow blouse thing and looked trim as could be--she'd give me my morning bath and we'd talk. She had babies, I think out of wedlock, or they'd been divorced. I kept up a correspondence with her for quite a while until after she wrote me that she was happily married again. I was so pleased to hear that, because she was just a darling person. But there were all sorts of people that took care of me. That was one of the hard things, too, to get used to, all these different people, and the lack of privacy. I was brought up to believe that you kept your body clean and covered and didn't expose it. But when you're in the hospital, you don't even have a chance to be private.

Bingham: As far as my therapy went, it was very good, particularly when I got back out here to Berkeley. I wish you could know how well the United Airlines planned the trip with the doctors. The doctor I had at the end was a young man and he'd been in the army, and he'd had experience in taking the wounded back from the Far East, so he knew how to plan it. He worked it out with United Airlines and Woodbridge. They flew me back on a little bed in an airplane. They had to put several seats down, but then they hitched up this little bed. The way it was held up was like what they hold up the lifeboats on a ship with.

Levenson: Davits?

Bingham: Davits, yes. And they had curtains all around so that I was quite private there and I could peek out to let them know that I was all right or what I needed. I hadn't had fresh fruit for a long time, so they gave me a wonderful lunch with a lot of fresh fruit.

It was a good flight and then the ambulance met me out here. They took me from the New London hospital by ambulance, New London to Bradley Field, Hartford. I looked out the back window and could see the beautiful autumn coloring in October in New England, and the beautiful bay. Marian had come to see me off; so had Dr. Charles Bingham.

The therapy at Alta Bates, Albany was excellent. They kept us extremely busy from 9:15 in the morning until afternoon around 4:00. I had several different women that were my therapists. Some were for my legs and feet and some were for my arms and upper body. The exercises they gave me seemed difficult and a few were extremely painful. Gradually I was able to regain some of my ability to use my left side. The main thing was I could walk again; I felt that was the real triumph. It took a lot of courage at some points.

Levenson: How long did it take you to walk again?

Bingham: I think it must have taken maybe six months before I could. I don't remember the exact time when I started walking, but it was gradual.

Levenson: My impression is that it was longer than that, Ursula.

Bingham: It was a very slow process because my left foot was so weak; it still is pretty bad about going into spasm and not functioning properly, but no longer pains. It gradually gets better.

I'd had a wonderful therapist, Mrs. Marion Rosen-Coath, whose class I attended for several years before I had this stroke. I used to go every Thursday morning at eight o'clock with friends

Bingham: for an hour, and it kept my muscles in good shape. What I really should have done was do exercises in between times and I'd have been better off, but I didn't. I did go swimming occasionally in Hearst Gymnasium for women at the University of California, Berkeley, with my friend, Margaret Gardner. But I think if I'd been more regular about my exercises, I'd have been a lot better off.

Levenson: I go to the same class, you know, on Tuesdays.

Bingham: Do you?

Marion is really wonderful, and she's recommended therapists to me here now, so that I have Mr. Frank Wildman, who is a very excellent person. I wish more people knew about him, but he doesn't have much time left. He's very popular and he's extremely good. He teaches classes for therapists in California and Australia. I've been able to really make much progress.

Levenson: Did you have problems with your speech?

Bingham: No, I didn't, fortunately. When you have your left side paralyzed, you can't speak well. I think my voice is different, but they say that as you get older, sometimes your voice gets low anyway.

Levenson: It's very attractive.

Bingham: It's a long process.

Levenson: I truly admire your courage and determination. It's a pleasure to see you walking.

Bingham: I've noticed the difference as time goes on. My friends seem to notice it more, because I think when you progress slowly yourself, you don't have a chance to measure it. Then when somebody doesn't see you for several weeks and then sees you and comments that you're doing better, that's very encouraging.

Levenson: What do you miss most?

Bingham: Driving the car. One of the things I've missed particularly is being able to go to the meetings that I used to, and associate with bright people. It's been very hard to give that up. But I think that I'll get to the point where I can do it again. Not being able to drive the car has limited my motion and my ability to get around in a way that is very distressing at times.

I think I'll tell you what I do enjoy doing now, and that is going out to lunch with friends occasionally, or having them in. And also going to lectures or music concerts, or the theater. We

Bingham: subscribe to a series of concerts at Zellerbach Hall. We have a very careful young man who drives a car, and he's able to take me in the wheelchair into the concert hall and out to the car after the concert.

The ticket taker knows him now so he lets him in and he takes me right to our seats, so I can sit in my wheelchair comfortably. I enjoy music so much; it's a great release and great fun to go out those evenings. One of our friends, Elizabeth Olney, comes and has dinner with us beforehand. She arranges about the driver who uses her car.

The other things I enjoy are going to the Town and Gown Club and hearing interesting people give a talk. And once a month, we have a book review. Some of the members are very expert at reviewing books. I enjoy these very much. I like reading a lot, so that I spend a great deal of time at home reading. This is something I couldn't do when I was active. So I'm thankful for that, that my eyes haven't been affected. Nor has my hearing. So I have to look on things I really can enjoy.

Levenson: You do some gardening, don't you?

Bingham: Yes, a little bit, but just with potted plants. I have a friend, Margaret Gardner, who has come up to help me. I cannot do this alone. We've separated plants and repotted things, and that's been very pleasant, because I used to do a lot of gardening and I belong to a little garden group called the Earthworms Garden Club. We have meetings once a month and a Christmas party every year.

At the Christmas party, we each bring a plant that we've grown to give to somebody else. They put all the plants on a table and number them; then they bring around a basket and we pick a number out of the basket, and we get the plant whose number matches the one we drew. Very seldom does anyone pull the number for their own plant. Then they have to make a substitution, of course.

It's a very jolly occasion. We have cookies that some of the entertainment committee have made and some tea, coffee, and fruit juice sometimes. We sit around a fire and really have an awfully good time together.

We visit plant nurseries at the other meetings. Sometimes we go to a fern nursery or a special kind. Sometimes we just go to a particularly good plant nursery. We have a speaker at a member's house. Sometimes we just go to see somebody's beautiful garden. Last year we went to a camellia garden out in Lafayette. The gentleman who had grown all these wonderful camellias gave me a perfectly beautiful, huge pink one, and I wrote him a letter of thanks later. He said if I wanted a plant, he had one plant he'd be glad to sell me.

Bingham: I did tell him I would like to, and Margaret Gardner took me out there and I bought the plant and I'm very thrilled to have it. I hope it's going to bloom here, though I don't have it in the proper situation. We don't have it under a big oak tree, and they like the oak leaves for fertilizer as well as pine needles.

This kind of thing really gives me great satisfaction and pleasure. Then, of course, having family nearby and coming in to meals or coming in to see us, is great. Our daughters have been wonderful about coming out to visit and help us catch up on chores that we can't do ourselves. Particularly Clare and Marian have been helpful.

Also, in sorting over my papers, because I was very untidy. I would just put things in a cupboard at the end of a year, or when we were going on a trip. We had so much room at the Tamalpais Road house. Now I've got it facing me to sort out and do something about. That's something I would advise anybody not to do, but to try to put a few days away each year to sit down and clear up last year's things and get them in tidy order, and keep them that way, because you waste an awful lot of time later. For instance, I'm just looking over old papers. But I'm glad to be able to have a challenge to do it for the purpose of this oral biography. So, I guess that's about it. It's a good rainy day occupation, anyway.

We were speaking of things that I liked to do. I do go to plays now with friends, and have been able to go to lectures and enjoy groups again, which I didn't think I was going to be able to, for a while. However, I haven't been able to be on the boards I used to be on, or do the effective work I could. Everything is done so slowly, writing a letter takes half an hour instead of ten minutes. This kind of thing is frustrating. But it's worth struggling to keep going, because I have such a wonderful family to look up to.

[insert from personal letter, December 2, 1983]

"When you and I were talking about what had given me the courage to go on toward recovery, I should have stated the fact more clearly that Evie was remarkably attentive and came to Alta Bates, Albany, every day to cheer me during those trying therapy sessions which at first were frequently painful. She gave me cheerful encouragement and even helped me to do some simple exercises in my room to try to regain the ability to move some joints which needed extra attention.

[insert from December 2, 1983 letter continued]

However, there came a time when she suddenly said that she should lead her own life and not let me be dependent on her. She did come to the house daily for several months but it conflicted with my therapy. So I changed the latter finally to another time, but she only came about once a week, if that, saying she was too busy. Well--she has been busy herself. But there has come to be a truly negative reaction to help, with a few exceptions, which is sad for me.

I know she has had a tough few months to live through, in getting a divorce, so I try to excuse it, but I really cannot imagine any of our other girls or myself behaving in this negative way. Forgive my outspokenness which is to help you understand, in part, my feelings of dismay."

[end insert]

Bingham: I guess, like most stroke patients, I did have bad crying spells of frustration and disappointment. But as time goes on, these are shorter and less disturbing as I assess my good fortune in having such excellent care and thoughtful friends and family.

Evie, thank goodness, was able to find a frame to hold the needlework which I like to do. I make needlepoint inserts for pillow covers. It's nothing very fancy, but at least I can use my needle some for diversion between reading or letter writing.

The frame holds the canvas in place, and I've learned how to thread my needle by sticking it into the roll of canvas on one end and making it firm, and then pressing the wool through the little long hole of the needle.

Levenson: One-handed, is this?

Bingham: One-handed, yes. It gives me some satisfaction to do that. It's a change from reading. But those two things--driving and sewing--I can't do now at all. [wistfully] And I miss it.

Levenson: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Bingham: Well, life is worth living again. I've been very grateful for my upbringing; it gave me a good philosophy of life.

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